

S E R M O N S

P R E A C H E D O N

SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

A T T H E

CATHEDRAL in NORWICH,

And at the PARISH CHURCHES of

ST. PETER's, MANCROFT,

A N D

ST. JOHN's, MADDERMARKEET,

In the said CITY.

By the late REVEREND

JOHN FRANCIS, LL. D. K

Minister of the said Parishes, and Rector of
MORLEY, in NORFOLK.

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

V O L. I.

Published from the Author's Manuscripts, by his Son
JOHN FRANCIS, M. A. Vicar of LAKEN-
HAM, near NORWICH; and Author of THE
LIFE OF KING DAVID.

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MDCCLXXIII.



26/6/46

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E R R A T A.

V O L. I.

Page 5. Pref. line 8, for chose, *r.* chosen.
Page 8, line 3, for chose *r.* chosen.
Page 74, Lines 11, and 13, for your *r.* there.—Page 81, line 8, for higheft, *r.* higher.—Page 99, line 3, between have and read, insert had.—Page 100, line 14, between by and judgments, insert God's.—Page 101, From line 11, dele both, and insert it in Line 12, between Laws and of.—Page 124. In the last line, insert between know and whether, the way. Page 125, line, 1. dele the Way. Page 128, Line 7, for infamed *r.* inflamed.—Page 174, line the last, dele the between and and undivided.—Page 190, line, 1 for adopted, *r.* adapted—Page 228, line 2, for ruts, *r.* rubs.

V O L. II.

Page 55, line 10, at the end of difference insert an s.—Page 112, line 3, for prac. *r.* practice.—Page 200, line 8, for preserving, *r.* persevering.—Page 221, line 19, between be and right insert, to.—Page 241 line 3, for impartiality, *r.* impartially.

ERRATA

Page 8, line 2, for choice, r. choice.
Page 8, line 3, for choice, r. choice.
Page 7, line 11, and 12, for your, r.
thee.—Page 81, line 8, for highest, r.
highest.—Page 81, line 9, between line
and read, insert had.—Page 100, line
14, between 10 and judgment, insert
God's.—Page 101, from line 11, delete
both, and insert it in line 12, between
I was and of.—Page 124, in the last
line, insert between know and whether,
the way.—Page 125, line 1, delete the way.
Page 128, line 7, for finished, r. im-
med.—Page 134, line the last, delete the
between and and undivided.—Page 136,
line 1, for adopted, r. adopted.—Page
138, line 2, for rats, r. rats.

VOLUME II.

Page 56, line 10, at the end of differ-
ence insert an s.—Page 112, line 3, for
prec. r. precise.—Page 121, line 8, for
prevised, r. prethwing.—Page 121,
line 10, between he and right insert, for
—Page 141 line 3, for impartiality, r.
impartiality.

TO THE

REV. *SAMUEL SALTER*, D. D.

MASTER of the CHARTER-HOUSE.

REVEREND SIR,

THE Friendship that subsisted between yourself and my late worthy Father, whose Works I have here taken the Liberty of inscribing to you, and the many kind Favours you have shewn his Son, since his Death, have emboldened him to take this Freedom, it being

Vol. I.

A

the

DEDICATION.

the only Method he had of testifying to the World, the grateful Sense he shall ever entertain of them.

Your Acceptance of it, in this Light, will add another Obligation to those already conferred upon,

REVEREND SIR,

Your most obedient,

Obliged humble Servant,

Topcroft, May 2,
1771.

JOHN FRANCIS.

A

P R E F A C E,

Giving some ACCOUNT of
the AUTHOR.

THE Reverend Dr. JOHN FRANCIS was born in the Parish of *St. Andrew*, in *Norwich*, *April* the 21st, O. S. 1700. His Father was Mr. *John Francis*, Notary-public, and for many Years Deputy Register of the Arch-Deacon of *Norfolk's* Office. A Man of an unblemished Character and Reputation. He died the 3^d of *January* 1757, in the ninety-third Year of his Age. He had, besides the Doctor, another Son, the present Register, and two Daughters.

The Doctor received the first Rudiments of his Education at the Free School in *Norwich*, under the Care of that worthy and learned Master Mr. *John Reddington*, late Rector of *Hethel* and *Rackeath*, in *Norfolk*, and formerly Fellow of *Trinity College, Cambridge*. From hence, in the Year 1718, he was removed to *Trinity Hall, Cambridge*, being by his Father designed for the Civil Law. He here acquired a thorough Knowledge in that useful Branch of Learning; and, by a very affable Behaviour, and becoming Respect, procured the Esteem and Regard of that learned Society. In 1723, he commenced Bachelor of Laws, and the same Year offered himself a Candidate for a Fellowship

P R E F A C E.

v

ship with another Gentleman of the same College; when, the Fellows Votes for both being equal, the Master rejected them, and chose one from *Jesus*. Upon this Disappointment Mr. *Francis* cut out his Name, and came to *Norwich*; where, in 1724, he was chose Proctor of the Ecclesiastical Court. He here defended his Causes in so masterly a Manner, as in a short Time procur'd him the Reputation of being an able and judicious Lawyer. But, this Employment not being agreeable to him, and his Inclinations leading him to Divinity, he, in the Year 1726, took Orders, and very soon became as eminent a Divine. The same Year he was presented to the Rectory of *Morley*, in *Nor-*

folk, by the above-mentioned Mr. *Reddington*; and in a few Weeks after was married to Miss *Susan Nash*, youngest Daughter of the late Reverend Mr. *Gwaen Nash*, Master of Arts; and though a Non-juring Clergyman, yet a very worthy Man. But with her he did not long enjoy the Happiness of the married State; for being frightened while she was with Child, she miscarried, of which she died *November 13th 1727*, in the twenty-sixth Year of her Age. Soon after her Death, on the Recommendation of that worthy Prelate *Dr. Tanner*, then Chancellor of *Norwich*, afterwards Bishop of *St. Asaph*, he was presented by *New College*, in *Oxford*, to the Rectory of *St. John's Maddermarket*, in *Norwich*. With
this

P R E F A C E. vii

this Preferment (Commencement 1729) Mr. *Francis* took his Doctor of Laws Degree: At which Time he disputed for upwards of seven Hours in the public Schools, with that learned Civilian Dr. *Dickens*, the then Law Professor; and at once displayed the Orator, the Disputant, and the Scholar. The next Year the Doctor re-entered the matrimonial State, and married Miss *Elizabeth Hughes*, only Child of the late Reverend and learned Dr. *Owen Hughes*, Chancellor and Prebendary of *Bangor*, in *North Wales*; a young Lady adorned with every Qualification requisite to render the married State agreeable. In the Year 1731 he offered himself a Candidate for the Assistant Minister's

Place of *St. Peter's Mancroft*, in *Norwich*; but was set aside, the late Reverend Dr. *Camell* being chose. The Year after, Dr. *Camell* dying, he offered himself again, but met with a second Repulse. These he bore with Christian Patience and Resignation, and proposed sitting down content with the Preferment with which it had pleased Providence to bless him. But the Doctor was so greatly beloved and esteemed for the Care he took of the Flock already committed to his Charge, and for his elegant and persuasive Manner of preaching the Doctrines of Christianity, that, in the Year 1740, on the Death of Mr. *Ganning*, some of the Parishioners desired him to offer himself again, and he

P R E F A C E. ix

he obtained the Election by the Majority of thirty-eight. The Diligence and Care with which the Doctor attended his new Parish, soon gained him their universal Approbation and Respect. In the Year 1745, the Rebellion then raging in *Scotland*, he more remarkably signalized himself for the many excellent Sermons he preached against Popery and Superstition, and in Defence of the present happy Establishment. The Year following he published one, entitled, *His Majesty's Justice and Clemency vindicated*, occasioned by the Complaints made concerning the Execution of the Rebels; in which appears the Christian, Divine, and loyal Subject. The same Year he was unanimously elected
Head

Head Minister of *St. Peter's*, vacant by the Death of the Reverend Mr. *Manlove*. But this he did not long enjoy: for the additional Duty of a Lecture Sermon to his other, was thought to have impaired his Health. On *April* the 25th 1749, he preached the Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace: But this was the last Time of his performing any Duty; for on the 27th of the same Month, he was taken ill of a Fever, attended with an Inflammation in his Bowels. The Distemper was flattering till the 6th of *May*, when a Mortification ensued, occasioned by a Decay of his Liver. In this Condition he languished to *Monday* the 8th, when, with great Resignation to the divine Will, and a Composure

P R E F A C E. xi

posure which nothing but the Con-
sciousness of a well-spent Life could
afford, he died, not only lamented
by his Relations and Acquaintance,
but likewise by those to whom he
was not personally known. He left
behind him a sorrowful Widow big
with Child (with whom he had
lived for upwards of eighteen Years
in an uninterrupted Series of con-
jugal Affection) a Son and two
Daughters. He was buried in the
Church-yard of *St. George's Tomb-
land*, by the Remains of his first
Wife, where a neat Monument, with
an elegant Inscription, composed by
the Reverend *James Welton*, B. D.
Prebendary of *Bristol*, is erected to
his pious Memory.

M. S.

M. S.

JOANNIS FRANCIS, Clerici, LL. D.
Sancti Petri Ædis in hac urbe Capellani,
Sancti Joannis ibidem Rectoris,
Nec non utriusque Morlæi in agro
Norfolienfi.

Literis tam sacris & abstrusis, quam
civilibus & politis,
Egregie fuit instructus.

Orator eruditus, Theologus pius, Civis
humanus.

Eloquentiæ, Fidei, Benevolentiaë,
Huic urbi, illustre præbuit exemplum.
Natus est Aprilis 21^{mo}, Anno Salutis
humanæ M.D.CC.

Placide in Domino obdormivit,
Maii 8^{vo} M.DCC.XLIX.

Mœrens hoc posuit Monumentum,
Ejus Uxor dilectissima,
ELISABETHA.

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SERMON

S E R M O N S

PREACHED ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

S E R M O N I.

AT THE

CATHEDRAL, Nov. 5, 1748.

*The Protection of Providence a Nation's
only Security.*

Romans, viii. 31.

What shall we then say to these Things?

*If God be for us, Who can be against
us?*

WITHOUT enquiring what gave
Occasion to these Words of the
Apostle, as in themselves considered,
they contain this Doctrine of general
Concern, *that Safety attends those on whose
Side the Almighty declares;* we will make
use of them, as they may be applied to

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B

the

the amazing Events which God has been pleased to signalize this Day by : A Day to be ever had in Remembrance by us all ; by the Members of this Church in particular ; by *Protestants* of all Denominations : For, when by our Enemies we were to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish ; when our King, our Princes, our Nobles, and our Prelates, were by Popish Treachery appointed as Sheep to the Slaughter, in a most inhuman and savage Manner, beyond the Examples of former Ages ; then it was that the Lord interposed : Though their Design was laid as deep as Hell, thence did he draw the Discovery. *Had not the Lord thus kept us, our Watchmen had waked but in vain !* But all was safe under his Providence and Protection ; for when he appeared, none could stand against us ; all Arts
and

and Stratagems failed; even Popish Craft, and jesuitical Policy were disappointed, and our Enemies perished themselves in the Pit which they made for others.

This Blow was long felt by them. All Men of Humanity, Reason, and Religion, regarded the intended Treason with Abhorrence; nor could they look upon a Church, contriving and abetting such a Scheme, without the utmost Terror and Aversion. Hence we find our Fore-Fathers, for many Years, extremely jealous and fearful of them; alarmed upon every the least Occasion; not caring to admit of any Rite or Ceremony, however innocent and decent, which *they* had used in *their* Worship; hating even the Garment spotted by the Flesh; offended at a

B 2 Vestment,

Vestment, as if defiled by *their* Use of it, though very appositely denoting, and putting us in mind, by its Whiteness, with what Purity of Heart we ought to approach the Throne of Grace. This too scrupulous and discontented Humour the Enemy took Care to improve and heighten. But yet, though by disguising themselves under all Shapes, and sowing the Seed of Discord and Sedition amongst us, they, for many Years, involved us in Anarchy and Confusion; all their Attempts proved abortive, and our Church, by divine Providence, weathered the Storm, and recovered again her former Splendor and Prosperity. *Then were we like unto those that dream*; we were all Joy and Transport: No Thought, no Reflection could get Admission: We had just emerged from the Waves which covered us, and gotten

ten into the Haven where we would be, and never once suspected there might still be Evils ashore, from which Danger might yet be apprehended. Though we were putting ourselves under Princes, who had resided for several Years in Popish Countries, and though one of them was known to be of the Religion of *Rome*, and the other not a little suspected to be of the same Persuasion, yet no Security for the *Protestant* Religion was sufficiently thought of, as if that could ever be safe under a Popish Prince, who is bound by what he thinks the strongest Obligations, to subvert *it*, and destroy its Members. We too soon saw our Error. Its best Friends were by Degrees taken off; some by Treachery, others by Violence; too many by that worst Kind of all Murders, a pretended due Course of Law;

by Witnessess suborned; by packed Juries; by Judges most corrupt and infamous. At last, the Mask was quite thrown aside, and our religious and civil Rights became both precarious. Then did a truly noble Spirit of Liberty, and a becoming Zeal for our Religion rise amongst us. The Clergy of the Church of *England*, to their immortal Honour and Praise, exerted themselves in their Defence, by their Writings, Discourses, and all the Ways which Piety and Wisdom could suggest; and to our Happiness, the Nobles and Gentry of the Land concurred with them, and all joined in applying to him, who alone, under God, could bring about their Deliverance. The Prince of *Orange*, from an innate Love and Affection to Truth and Liberty, derived, as it were, by Inheritance from a long Line of glorious

rious Ancestors, chearfully engaged in their Service, and being most remarkably assisted therein by divine Providence, made this Day a second Time memorable for our Rescue from Popish Tyranny, and arbitrary Power. We had ceased to look, even, upon the Restoration as a Blessing, if it had not thus been made such by the Revolution. What shall we then say to these Things? The Result is plainly this: *If God be for us, none can do any Thing against us. He disappointeth the Devices of the Crafty, so that their Hands cannot perform their Enterprize. He taketh the Wise in their own Craftiness, and the Counsel of the Froward is carried headlong.*

We have lately seen this verified once more; when the same restless Spirit had again been endeavouring to disturb, to

destroy our Sion ; when our Enemies entered our Kingdom with a high Hand, erected their Standard in the Centre of it ; came Home to our very Doors, alarming even our Metropolis ; the divine Goodness, still mindful and careful of our Welfare, by a wonderful Chain of providential Acts, dispersed them all, to our equal Joy and Surprize. To that all gracious Being, who has been thus bountiful to us, let us express our grateful Sense of these Mercies. *Not unto us ; not unto us ;* let the Praise be not even to our King ; not to our Princes, or our Soldiers let us ascribe the Blessings we enjoy, but unto him by whom Kings reign ; unto the Lord of Hosts, under whom Generals fight, and Armies are rendered victorious or defeated ; for they are but Instruments in his

his Hand, and whom he will, he crowneth with Glory.

But here let us pause a little, and inquire for what Cause has the Lord been thus gracious to us? Has it been for our Righteousness, that the Lord hath thus cast out our Enemies before us? Our Hearts, I fear, will testify the Contrary! Not for our Righteousness, or for the Uprightness of our Hearts, hath the Lord done these great Things for us, but to bring us to a Sense of our Obligations to him; to turn us from the Evil of our Ways, and to prevail upon us to live henceforward as becomes those, who have thus been the peculiar Care of his Providence. Our Zeal for his true and pure Religion has been, I doubt not, pleasing in his Sight; but what can alone make the Zeal still

more grateful and acceptable to him, is a Conformity of our Lives to the Faith we profess. For a sound Creed, and a vicious Practice, are Things entirely inconsistent; and a bad Life gives the Lie to the greatest Zeal for God and his Glory. It tends, indeed, to derogate from his Honour, to suppose that he will still defend and protect those, who, professing themselves Disciples of his Son, live, nevertheless, in a perverse Disobedience to his Commands. From those whom he makes the Objects of his especial Grace and Favour, he expects proportionable Returns of Piety and Goodness. For, though *from the Beginning he hath chosen us*, and put *us into a Way of Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit and Belief of the Truth*; yet, to make our Calling and Election sure, we must approve ourselves

selves his peculiar People, by being always zealous of good Works. When we consider how deficient we have been in these, we may well say, *It is of the Lord's Mercy that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not.* Nay, *If the Lord himself had not been on our Side, when our Enemies rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick, when they were so wrathfully displeased at us.* If they had prevailed, what would have been the Consequence? If we had survived, we had been excluded this House of Prayer, unless we would have joined in a Service abominable in God's Sight. Instead of our excellent and rational Form of Prayer, agreeable to the Pattern our blessed Saviour has left us, a Mass Book we must have had, in an unknown Tongue; after the Wisdom of this World, under that vail,

prudently enough concealing the many Blasphemies and Impieties therein contained. With the Worship of the true God, we must have most unnaturally and prophanely joined Idolatry. We must have paid our Adoration to Stocks and Stones, the Images of Angels and Saints, and Persons, who had either never any Being at all, or were the Scandal and Reproach of human Nature. In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we must have given up our Senses: We must have no longer given Credit to either our Feeling or Sight, Taste or Smell; we must have worshipped we know not what; *an impossible corporeal Presence of our Lord*, and been deprived of that Cup, of which he has expressly commanded us all to drink. Our Churches we should have seen filled in all Quarters with Idols, and idolatrous Shrines

Shrines and Altars, and ourselves obliged to bow down to them. But I hope we have not so learned *Christianity*, as that we should, upon any Consideration whatsoever, have been prevailed upon to comply with such Impieties. I am *persuaded better Things of you, and Things which accompany Salvation, though I thus speak.* We have been not only taught and convinced of the saving Truths of the Gospel, but were, I doubt not, firmly resolved, with the divine Grace assisting us, to have undergone any Evils, and even Death itself, rather than have joined in Things so offensive to our God. For if there be any Sin, which the Almighty has testified a more than ordinary Detestation and Abhorrence of, it is Idolatry. Nor are there any, who will be more severely dealt with hereafter, than those who are knowingly

ingly and wilfully guilty of it. Our Deliverance therefore from these Trials, we ought to look upon as Matter of our Joy and Gratitude; for we cannot possibly tell, not even the most zealous and resolved amongst us, whether we should have been Proof against such Temptations, as we should then have been assaulted with: For if we were not in Danger from Temptations, our blessed Saviour had not made it one of the Petitions in the Prayer he has left us, viz. *Lead us not into Temptation*; but he knew the Weakness and Frailty of our Nature; and by permitting *St. Peter* to fall, after his most earnest Assurances never to forsake or deny him, he at once shewed the Folly of those, who not only reckon him to have been infallible, but his pretended Successors too, as sitting in his Chair; and also warneth us
not

not to be too confident of our own Strength. But, how Proof soever we ourselves should have been, at least we have great Reason to be glad and rejoice for the Sake of our weaker Brethren, who might not have been able to have withstood them; and especially for the Sake of our younger Children, who, unless God had miraculously interposed, must infallibly have become a Prey to their Delusions.

These Things demanding then the utmost Tokens of Gratitude, What shall we return unto the Lord for all these Benefits? We must first of all especially take heed that we sin no more. We must immediately put away from us those Things which were offensive in God's Sight, and upon Account of which he encompassed us thus with Terrors on every

every Side, in Order to bring us to Reflection, and an Amendment of our Conduct. And what those Sins are, every Man, upon consulting his own Heart, and examining his past Life, will quickly see. And that, indeed, is our Concern. We may, and should, it is true, endeavour the Reformation of as many as we can, but Success with others is not always in our Power; nor does our being in the Favour or Displeasure of God depend upon their Behaviour. According to our own Conduct, shall we be pleasing or displeasing in his Sight; because this is in our own Power, with the divine Assistance, which will never be wanting to our hearty Endeavours. If every one of us would take Care to amend himself, we should quickly see that Reformation, which we all pretend to wish for and desire. Now there is
no

no one who can be at a Loss to know, upon the least Reflection, wherein he has transgressed the Law of his God. What his Conscience often reproacheth him with, and what he is forced to be at some Pains to conceal from the Rest of the World, will soon, upon Recollection, inform him wherein he has been faulty, and in what Respect it behoves him to be more careful of his Duty for the Time to come. To these he should apply his Thoughts for the Future: Against these he should be perpetually on his Guard; for as these are the Sins which more easily beset him, of these he should be more particularly cautious.

But there is one very heinous Sin, which may, but too justly, be called a national Sin. A profane and impious Spirit has long reigned amongst us.

Prospe-

Prosperity, instead of making us grateful to the Author of it, has had, amongst too many, a quite contrary Effect. It has made us unmindful of our God; and his Blessings have been too generally made the Instruments, whereby we have offended and affronted him. Nay, in the Midst of our greatest Dangers, we have too much trusted in the Arm of Flesh, and after God has blessed us with Success, have ascribed it to the same weak and uncertain Cause. This, it must be owned, we have been betrayed into from Motives by no Means base and ungenerous. It has arisen from that unlimited Regard and Respect, which the constant Exertion of excellent Endowments has almost forced from us to our Sovereign. We could not see him perpetually engaged in our Protection and Service, ever watchful for our Welfare,

Welfare, till he had restored us to Peace and Quietness; without looking upon him as our guardian Angel, and thinking no Encomiums or Honours too great to pay him.

And, indeed, whilst we look up to God as the final Cause, as the Original of all the Blessings derived to us through him, we shall be far from being displeasing in his Sight, if we express a becoming Esteem towards his immediate Instrument, and behave ourselves towards his Vice-gerent, with Gratitude, Honour and Obedience. To praise and value the Benefactors of Mankind, is but to give them the just Recompence of their Merit. It is no more than we are bound to by the clearest Dictates of Reason, the unalterable Rules of Justice, and the strongest Ties of Gratitude.

tude. It is, in short, to encourage Virtue, and to promote our own and the common Interest of Mankind. Though no one ever doubted our Prince's Courage, though that has shone forth both before and since the Commencement of the War, yet, with what Difficulty was he brought into it, from a paternal Concern for our Welfare, and the just Apprehension he had of the Dangers we should thereby be exposed to; and which, not without the greatest Bravery, and the most political Address, he has now happily carried us safely through. The good of his People he had always at Heart; and he could neither hear them complaining of the Wrongs they suffered, without an earnest Desire to redress them, and was yet at the same Time exerting his utmost Endeavours to remove the Cause of their Complaints,

plaints, without involving them in a War, which threatened them with more and greater Evils : But, when it could no longer be avoided, he exerted a noble Spirit, well becoming him. That Virtue, which in the most sublime Degree always adorned him, shewed forth itself, and, in his own Person, he repelled the Rage of War. The Desire of Fame, with which the Souls of many are inspired, and which alone they want to gratify, had no Charms with him, barely in itself considered : But, when the good of his Country was in View, and Justice pointed out the Laurel, Death, in its most tremendous Form, lost all its Terror, and his Valour was undaunted. He found us a brave and a free People, and he was determined, if he could, to preserve and leave us such.

His

His Discendants he has brought up in the same noble and generous Sentiments and Conduct. They walk in his Steps; and whilst the Heir Apparent is qualifying himself from his Example in the Policy and Art of Government at Home, his Brother has been putting in Practice Abroad, what his Father taught and displayed in the Field of Battle. His Conduct in the Suppression of the late dangerous Rebellion, and the Qualifications of an able General, exerted by him Abroad, have shewed how well he had profited under his illustrious Leader; and his Behaviour has been such upon all Occasions, as becomes a Prince fighting for the Liberty of a free People, and not to enslave them. Those who bear Arms under him, are sure, upon their Return, to reap the only desirable Fruits of it; their own and their
fellow

fellow Subjects enjoying their civil and religious Rights and Liberties in their full Extent; whereas those who have been fighting for our Enemies, have been only enabling them to rivet their Chains the faster; to add Severity to their Bondage, and make them, if it can be, more completely miserable. Their Aim was to root up and destroy God's true Religion amongst us, and to plant in its Stead Superstition and Idolatry; to deprive us of Liberty, without which even Virtue itself must mourn; and notwithstanding all their Pretensions to the Contrary, to plunge us in the very Depth of Misery. This, perhaps, may seem strange to some good natured Persons among us, who call themselves *Catholics*. But they are deluded, and are not what they think themselves. Popery in *England* falls far short of what it is in foreign

foreign Parts; and if it were ever to get the upper Hand in this Kingdom, they would find themselves as wretched as we. Such Things would then be required of them, as I am persuaded, they would rather burn at a Stake than comply with. The only Way to judge of Popery, is, from what the Professors of it have done, and what they now do in Places where they have the Dominion. The intended Treason of this Day shews us what Manner of Spirit they are of, and their Usage of *Protestants* upon other Occasions makes it manifest, that there is no trusting their Promises or Oaths. That Faith is not to be kept with those whom they call Heretics, was most terribly verified in that horrible Massacre at *Paris*, by *Charles* the IXth, who, under a Shew of more than ordinary Kindness for the *Protestants*, assembled them
all

all together, and in the Space of seven Days, destroyed, by various Kinds of Death, according to the most moderate Accounts, upwards of Twenty-five Thousand, not sparing either Women or Children. And this monstrous Cruelty and Perfidiousness was so far from being condemned at *Rome*, that it was there highly approved and applauded.

The Massacre in *Ireland*, in the Middle of the last Century, was another Instance of their unparalleled Cruelty and Hatred to *Protestants*, when they most inhumanly butchered above Forty Thousand. And that the same Spirit still reigns amongst them appears from the constant Practice of the Inquisition, and the late Persecution in *France*, though a Kingdom the least bigotted of any; and it is to be hoped, opening her

Eyes, now to better Light, and leaving the *City and Harlot* doomed to Destruction.

Hence we see the Greatness of the Deliverances we this Day commemorate; of what Moment and Importance they were to us. Since to those we owe our Exemption from those Evils and Persecutions with which other Christians have been severely exercised; to which we are indebted for the present Government and happy Establishment we live under; the free and undisturbed Enjoyment of all that is truly dear and valuable to us; the Exercise of God's true Religion, and the Security of our Lives and Possessions. A Constitution in which, as one well observes, the Prince is all powerful to do good, and at the same Time is restrained from committing Evil: Where
the

the Nobles are great without Insolence, though there are no Vassals; and where the People share in the Government without Confusion. It were almost barbarous, one would think, to suspect that any of us should be indifferent to these Things, or so void of common Sense, as to imagine they could ever be in Safety under those who are known and professed Enemies to all public Liberty, both civil and religious. But, I know not how it is, we live in an Age of unintelligible Riddles and Paradoxes. We have those *who call Evil, Good; and Good, Evil; who put Darknefs for Light, and Light for Darknefs*; who can prefer the gloomy uncomfortable State of Nature to the glorious Light of the Gospel of Christ; or are so surfeited with the Happiness they have long enjoyed, that they are become weary of it, and are desirous

of a Change, though they know it must end in Distress and Ruin. I hope none, who hear me this Day, are of this Number: Their being present on this solemn joyful Occasion promises a better Mind, since nothing grateful to Persons otherwise disposed could be here expected. It is a blessed and joyful Thing that we meet here together in Unity. Let us preserve it in the Bond of Peace. We may have some petty Differences amongst ourselves. Let them not create any Dislike or Discord amongst us; but, *bearing with one another*, let us give up and sacrifice our private Enmities and Quarrels to the public Good and Safety of the Common Wealth. By thus uniting in brotherly Love and Charity, we shall prove that Bulwark against our Enemies, which by no other Means we can be. It were much to be wished we could

could all join in one Communion and Manner of Worship; and some of those who differ from us would seem to have the same Desire; but they are out in their Project for Accomodation. They think that could be brought about by abolishing, what they call, Human Schemes, all Creeds, Confessions and Articles: But they are mistaken; for we should then be more divided than we are now; we should be all Confusion; we should be like a Foundation of Sand to a weighty Building; which, whatever Shew it might make, would not be able to support it long, for want of Union, Solidity, and that Strength and Firmness which are necessary. The Necessity of some Terms or other of Communion is plainly seen by there being no Church or Community of Christians in the World without them: However, amongst us *Protestants* there

can be no good Reason why we should not all be joined in Christian Love and Charity; since the Holy Scriptures we all acknowledge to be the common Standard of our Faith and Practice, and we are all willingly under the same Prince, who has approved himself our common Guardian and Defender. But, finally, whilst we are at Peace with one another, let us above all take Care that we be not found at Enmity with God. Our Preservation; the Union and Happiness we enjoy, we owe to his continued Bounty and Goodness; when he appeared for us, none could hold out against us any longer. The least Return then, surely, we can make him, is to give ourselves up to his Service, act in his Fear, and to his Glory. Upon ingenuous and grateful Minds, such is the Effect to be expected; to our all gracious God none more pleasing

pleasing and acceptable; none that will so assuredly continue to us Peace and Prosperity in this World; the only Means whereby we can be happy in that which is to come. That therefore we may all of us act thus wisely, may the same God, of his infinite Mercy, work in and with us, to his Glory and our Happiness, both now and for ever more, even for *Jesus Christ's* Sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. *Amen.*

S E R M O N II.

On the P E A C E.

Preached upon the Thanksgiving Day,

APRIL the 25th, 1749,

A T

St. PETER'S MANCROFT, in NORWICH.

St. Luke, ii. 14.

*Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth
Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

AS, upon the Creation of Man, the
Morning Stars sang together, and
all the Sons of God shouted for Joy,
so was his Redemption, his second Crea-
tion ushered in by the same heavenly
Host, with this divine Hymn in my
Text,

Text, *Glory to God in the Higbest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men:* Wherein we have united all the grand Causes of extraordinary Joy and Festivity: For what other Ground can there be for rejoicing, than when the Honour of that Being is secured, upon whose good Pleasure all the Happiness we are capable of, entirely depends; when Peace in general is established in the World, and private Men live in Friendship and Good-will towards one another. Thus has my Text been commonly supposed to consist of three Parts or Members. But, by some of the Writings of the ancient Fathers, it appears, that the Copies they made use of had a Reading of my Text, different from that from which our Translation was made. According to them we are thus to read it; *Glory to God in the Higbest, and in Earth*
C 5 *Peace,*

Peace, to, or, amongst Men of Good-will
(*En Anthropois Eudokias*) A Sense full
of divine Doctrine, excellent Instruction,
and seasonable Admonition. Hence we
see, my Text consists but of two Parts,
but more expressive and instructive than
our common Reading, though divided
into three. For here is all which is
contained in that, and besides, a most
material and useful Intimation given,
that Men must have Good-will, must
be well disposed, or they can neither,
with Acceptance, give Glory to God, or
be at Peace with one another.

This last, therefore, as being most
adapted to the Design of our present
assembling together, I shall choose to
follow in the further Prosecution of this
Discourse. In which, perhaps, it may
not be improper, first, to consider the
the

the Occasion, the End and Design of this our solemn Meeting in the House of God, before we attempt to shew, whereby we may give Glory to God for the Blessings we enjoy, and make ourselves worthy to have them continued to us. Our Sovereign, in his Royal Proclamation for this Day's Solemnity, has well expressed this; "That as it has
" pleased Almighty God, in his great
" Goodness, to put an End to the late
" bloody and expensive War, by the
" Conclusion of a just and honourable
" Peace," *We should adore the divine Goodness therein, and duly considering, that such great and public Blessings do call for public and solemn Acknowledgments, we should all join in a general Thanksgiving for these his Mercies.* And, indeed, the Evils and Miseries of War are so many and great, that a Deliverance from them,

if duly considered, must raise in us the most grateful Sentiments. Though we of this Nation have been most happily preserved from the immediate Fury of it, yet how have we thought the Taxes and Burthens it has occasioned, almost insupportable; how have they filled many of us with Murmur and Discontent, disregarding the Good we enjoyed, for the unusual Pressures which we felt.

What then had we thought, had we been made the Seat of War! To have heard the Cannon thundering in our Ears—To have seen our Churches and Houses flaming over our Heads—To have heard the dreadful Cracks of their Falls, mixed with the confused Outcries of Men killing, encouraging to ~~kill~~, or resist; dying, and the piercing Shrieks
of

of Women and Children! God be thanked, we never saw tender Babes most inhumanly snatched from their Mothers Breasts; nor bleeding on the Ground, or sprawling on the Ends of Pikes; and the distracted Mother first made a shocking Prey to brutal Lust, and then butchered! We never beheld Men and Horses lie rolling together in their mingled Blood, and the ghastly Visages of Death mangled with Wounds—The impotent Wife hanging with Tears on her armed Husband, as desirous to die with him, since without him she must not live—The amazed runnings to and fro of those that would fain escape, if they knew how, and the furious Pursuit of a bloody Victor!—Houses rifled and plundered—Soldiers laden with the Spoil—The miserable Captive driven in Chains before the insulting

sulting Enemy. These Evils we never experienced; but many of our near Neighbours have; and we too might have now been labouring under the same, heightened by the blind Rage of superstitious Zeal, if it had not pleased God to put an End to this War. And can the Consideration of the Miseries we have thus escaped, fail of raising grateful Thoughts to our divine Protector? But where with all shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God? Will the Lord be pleased with our Shouts and Acclamations; with our Feasting and Demonstrations of Joy? Or will even these our solemn Praises and Thanksgivings be acceptable in his Sight, if they be unaccompanied? Our Hearts must be lifted up, must be warmed with Gratitude, must be exalted in the Way
of

of the Lord. We must *loose the Bands of Wickedness, and put away the Evil of our doings from before God's Eyes; we must draw out our Soul to the Hungry, and satisfy the afflicted Soul;* that in this Day which the Lord hath made, all may be glad and rejoice together. For as it is the End of God's Judgments, that the Inhabitants of the World may learn Righteousness, so it is no less the Purpose of his Mercies. *He draws us now with the Cords of a Man;* with Bands of Love and Affection does he now endeavour to bind us to his Service. We have seen, at a Distance, the Effects of his Displeasure upon others; but *before us he makes all his Goodness to pass, and proclaims himself our God, merciful and gracious, and abundant in Goodness and Truth.* By the Fears and Terrors he surrounded us with, he tried and discovered

covered what was in our Hearts; whether we had any Regard for him, or Zeal for his Religion. And as *Solomon*, inspired by his Wisdom, found out by the like Method, which of the two Women was the real Mother of the living Child; so has our God proved us. By bringing our Religion into Danger, he roused in us that true Value and Concern for it, which before laid too dormant in us. This we now behold was pleasing in his Sight. To this we may justly ascribe his Appearance in our Favour; his dissipating those Storms which threatened us, and making his *Sun of Peace to arise upon us with healing in his Wings.*

It lies now strongly upon us to make suitable Returns for such immense Goodness: What Soul, that has any
Gene-

Generosity in it, is not moved to a grateful Return, by Acts of Kindness and Beneficence? Who can forbear regarding a generous Benefactor with Love and Delight? Who would not think it impossible he should ever prove unmindful of him, and much less willingly offend or displease him? Gratitude is what all Men approve and praise, and though it has been doubted by some, whether that Love and Service of God, which arise from the Good we hope or expect from him, be such as are worthy and laudable, yet no one ever questioned, but Benefits already conferred, should be followed by suitable Acknowledgments. We have all these Motives and Inducements to make us love and serve God. It will not only, therefore, be basely ungrateful in us, should we be found deficient in these Respects, but foolish,

foolish, past all Expression, should we act contrary to them. But especially, if we consider further more particularly, wherein we are required to love and serve God. *To give Glory to him in the Highest, who is over all God blessed for ever*; for from such a View we shall see how much we shall thereby establish Peace and Happiness amongst us.

And this is in the first Place to be our great Care and Concern to preserve his Religion amongst us pure and uncorrupted. He has now freed us from those public Enemies, whose Desire and Aim it was by Force to have despoiled us of it. Their open Attempts have, by his good Providence and Protection, been happily defeated; and having now put it in our Power to guard and defend it, he expects we should exert the
Facul-

Faculties he has given us to that Purpose. They have still their Agents amongst us, secretly attempting to disturb our Quiet. They do all they can to corrupt and seduce the Ignorant, to sow Discontent amongst us. As this, therefore, should put us on our Guard, so should it make us particularly industrious, to instruct and season those under our Care, with Principles of Religion and Virtue, with a Love for their Country, with a sincere Concern for its Welfare and Happiness. And for this End, what is it which so immediately presents itself to our Thoughts, as to shew them the Necessity we are therefore under to endeavour, all we can, the Support of that Prince, who, under God, has been the Guardian and Protector of it. How perpetually has he been engaged in our Protection and Service!

vice! How watchful for our Welfare! How unwearied in his Endeavours to restore us to Peace and Quietness! To God we must always look up as the final Cause; as the Origin of all the Blessings derived to us. Our Sovereign we are to regard as the Instrument; as the Vice-gerent whom he hath delighted to honour. Towards him we should behave, as God hath ordained, with Gratitude, Honour, and Obedience. And, indeed, to praise and value the Benefactors of Mankind, is but to give them the just Recompense of their Merit. It is no more than we are bound to by the clearest Dictates of Reason, the unalterable Rules of Justice, and the strongest Ties of Gratitude. It is, in short, to encourage Virtue, and to promote our own, and the common Interest of Mankind.

Seeing

Seeing then we enjoy, through the divine Goodness, such inestimable Blessings, let us now endeavour to turn our Thoughts to what will most undoubtedly secure to us the divine Favour, and the Continuance of them, which we now, I hope, with Sincerity of Heart, return God thanks for. For even this is not enough, thus *to give unto the Lord the Honour due unto his Name*. We must do something further on this extraordinary Occasion: And what is that? The Royal Psalmist will inform us. *We must bring an Offering, and come before him*. In the Dispensation he was under, this had Respect to those Sacrifices, which the Law prescribed, but were Types of Sacrifices of a more spiritual Nature. What we are to understand by this Expression, is thus elegantly explained and illustrated by the wise Son of

of Syrach. *He that keepeth the Law, bringeth Offerings enow: He that taketh heed to the Commandment, offereth a Peace Offering. He that requiteth a good Turn, offereth fine Flour; and he that giveth Alms, sacrificeth Praise. To depart from Wickedness is a Thing pleasing to the Lord, and to forsake Unrighteousness is a Propitiation.* And this is what the Royal Psalmist himself meant, when he said, *an offering of a free Heart*, an Heart free from all Pollution and Corruption, from all Sin and Hypocrisy. An Oblation of such an honest and sincere Heart will I give thee, and praise thy Name, O Lord, because it is so comfortable. And this is what we must imitate him in, and what, indeed, in our former Humiliations and Fasts we engaged ourselves to. We are now to pay unto God those Vows, which we promised with our
Lips,

Lips, and spoke with our Mouths, when we were in Trouble. Now God has made us whole, we must take heed that we sin no more. We must put away from us those Things, which were offensive in his Sight, and for the Sake of which he encompassed us thus with Terrors on every Side. What those are every Man, upon examining his own Heart, and reviewing his past Life, will quickly see. For who of us is there, if we will but reflect upon our former Conduct and Behaviour, but must be conscious, wherein we have transgressed God's Commandments. There is not a Day passes, but we, in some Degree or other, become guilty before God. Let us then call these Things to Remembrance; let us apply our utmost Care and Diligence to avoid that
Sin

Sin which doth most easily beset us; and to render it successful, let us apply to him by Prayer for his Grace and Assistance, to keep us back from those presumptuous Sins, which will otherwise get the Dominion over us; so shall we preserve ourselves innocent and undefiled from the great Offence.

The Zeal we expressed for God's true Religion, in the Day of our Calamity, was, I make no Doubt, acceptable in his Sight. I know not to what else we can ascribe the Blessing we this Day return him Thanks for. I wish it was likewise in my Power to impute it to the Innocence and Virtue of our Lives: Sure I am, however, the former will not last long, much less be attended with God's Favour, if we do not also add to our Faith, Virtue. For *St. Paul* assures us,
that

that not the Hearers of the Law are just before God, but the Doers of the Law shall be justified; and St. James saith, that Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead being alone. For it is not our being Disciples of the blessed Jesus, professing his Religion, and being baptized in his Name, that will bring Glory to God, unless we add to such our Profession an Obedience to his Commands; otherwise it will tend to derogate from his Honour, to suppose that he will still be the Guardians of them, who only say unto him, *Lord, Lord, but do not the Things which he commands.* From those whom he thus makes the Objects of his especial Grace and Favour, he may well expect proportionable Returns of Piety and Goodness. This is that *Eudokia*, that Good-will mentioned in my Text, that best Disposition of Mind, whereby alone we can

be pleasing to God; whereby we are enabled to give Glory to him, or preserve Peace to ourselves. Without this he has declared that all our Devotions will be an Abomination in his Sight. *There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.* To remind us of these Things, the Almighty brought us into Danger. He has now fixed us once more under that happy Government, for which we are the Envy of foreign States, under which we have the free and undisturbed Enjoyment of all that is truly dear and valuable to us: The Exercise of God's true Religion, and the Security of our Lives and Possessions. But let us remember withal, that, as we have experienced, *God's Hand was not shortened that it could not save,* so neither is his Power now lessened that it cannot punish. He has other Plagues in Store
besides

besides that of War; which if, as *Pharaoh*, we still harden our Hearts, he will most assuredly bring upon us; and the Locusts, called in Scripture, *his great Army*, may cover our Land, and as effectually ruin and destroy us, as any other foreign Enemy could. Their Harbingers are sent before them, to let us know what we are to expect, unless by Piety and Virtue we avert the Judgment threatened, and thereby prevail with the Lord to destroy or blow them back again.

Let then these Thoughts sink deep into our Hearts; let them have a suitable Effect upon our Minds and Lives; let every one of us do his Part, that these may be the Days, this the Time, *when Iniquity shall be sought for amongst us, and there shall be none; when our Sins*

shall be enquired after, and not be found.

So shall we truly give *Glory to God in the Highest*; so shall we be and approve ourselves *those Men of Good-will*, amongst whom Peace and Happiness will always flourish and abound. Which great Blessings God of his infinite Mercy grant, for Jesus Christ's Sake, our ever gracious Lord and Saviour, to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Adoration, Praise and Thanksgiving, now and for evermore.

Amen.

On

S E R M O N III.

On S E L F - M U R D E R.

P R E A C H E D A T

The C A T H E D R A L, A P R I L 16, 1749.

Job ii. Part of Ver. 10.

*What ! Shall we receive Good at the Hand
of God, and shall we not receive Evil?*

Preached also at St. PETER'S MANCROFT,
and St. JOHN'S MADDERMARKE.

AS the Wisdom of preventing a Disease in the Body is justly to be preferred before the Art of curing it, so is it much more so in the Maladies of the Mind, especially where the Evils proceeding from them, being once admitted, are past Remedy, and not to be
D 3 redressed.

redressed. And hence it is, that divine Providence has, from Time to Time, revealed his Will to Mankind, at certain Intervals, to warn Men of approaching Dangers, and of Evils which threatened their Ruin and Destruction. Thus, in the first transaction between God and Man, we find our first Parents cautioned against meddling with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, because the Consequence of their eating of the Tree should be, *that in the Day they should eat thereof, they should surely die*, they should thenceforward become mortal, and be themselves and their Posterity the Objects of God's Displeasure and Vengeance. And so, likewise, before the Entrance of the Children of *Israel* into the Land of Promise, God, by his Servant Moses, cautions them against their growing unmindful of him through Prosperity,

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Prosperity, and forsaking him, their Deliverer, and falling into Idolatry, into the Worship of false Gods, Gods which their own vain Fancies should create, which their own Hands and Fingers should make; or imitate those Nations whom they were to succeed, in those very Abominations, for which the Lord, they knew, would drive them out. In like Manner our blessed Saviour warns his Disciples and Followers of *false Prophets*, which should afterwards arise; bidding them not go after them, or hearken unto them. Lo! says he, *I have told you*, that when they should appear, they might remember he had told them of them, and might avoid them. And all of us he has forewarned of the Errors which should arise in the Christian Church, which are so expressly pointed out to us, by himself, or his Apostles,

that it must be our own Fault, if we be betrayed into them; and they are such an Evidence at the same Time of his Divinity, that he who is not convinced thereby of the Truth of our Religion, must be an Infidel self-condemned, and without Excuse. What better Examples then can the Ministers of the Gospel follow, than those which their Creator was pleased to set, and which they see confirmed by the Practice of their Redeemer, and his Apostles and Followers, under the Direction and Influence of the divine Spirit.

In Imitation, therefore, of these great Patterns, we will consider the Case of that unhappy Set of Men, who, being oppressed with any severe Affliction, think of nothing else to ease their desponding Minds, but the Instruments of
Death;

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Death; and without considering the Value of Life, and the Ends for which God gave it them, profanely return him back the Present, as if what he, the Author of every good Gift, has bestowed, was by them to be kept or thrown away as they pleased.

Job, that excellent Man in my Text, we find, thought Life was not at our own Disposal. For when his Wife, not able to bear the terrible Change of their Condition, from the Top of human Glory, to the lowest State of Wretchedness and Misery, in the utmost Despair, bid him *curse God and die*, by laying violent Hands upon himself, in which rash Action she seems likewise ready to accompany him, he reads her another Lesson. I will repeat what she said to him, as we have it in the *Septuagint*,
D 5 which,

which, it is more than probable, was taken from a Transcript of *Ezra's* Copy, who was divinely inspired, and consequently a much more ancient and authentic Copy of the Holy Scriptures, than that from which our Translators made their Version. For at the Time when the Seventy made their Translation, there was in the Temple at *Jerusalem*, a true authentic Copy of the *Hebrew Bible*, written by *Ezra*, or under his Inspection. And as the *Jews* of *Alexandria* had a free Intercourse with their Brethren in *Judea*, these being then likewise subject to the King of *Egypt*, at whose Directions this Translation was made, we need not doubt of its being taken from that authentic Copy. Thus therefore we find in that Version, this Passage of *Job*: “Dost
“ thou still, says his Wife, retain thy
“ Integrity,

“ Integrity, saying, I will wait yet awhile,
 “ being not yet without Hopes of my
 “ Restoration. For behold, what Ground
 “ is there for any such Hope? Every
 “ Memorial of thy former happy State
 “ is vanished from the Earth. Thy
 “ Sons, and thy Daughters, whom I
 “ have in vain brought forth with many
 “ Pains and Throws, are all snatched
 “ away; and thou thyself art forced to
 “ set in the open Air upon a Dung-hill,
 “ whilst I am become a Slave and a
 “ Vagabond, wandering from Place to
 “ Place, from House to House, waiting
 “ the Setting of the Sun, when by Sleep
 “ I may lull my Sorrows, which now
 “ encompass and distress me on every
 “ Side. Let us bear these Afflictions
 “ no longer; return the Lord his Pro-
 “ mises and die.” Here we see two
 Persons in the very Depth of Misery

and Affliction, from a State quite the Reverse; one of them in Despair, not able to bear up under it; the other wisely arguing on the Side of Providence, absolving his Justice, and relying on his Goodness. *Thou speakest*, says *Job*, to her, *as one of the foolish Women speaketh*, as one who does not consider Things rightly, nor the Obligations we stand in to our Creator. Our very Being, and all that we have hitherto enjoyed, we owe entirely to his Bounty; and what should be the Result of that Reflection? *Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil*, without repining and Discontent? All that I had came from him: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.* Him will I still bless, his Name will I praise;

praise ; for Good, I am sure, is the End of all his Dispensations.

Of the many Persons who have been guilty of Self-murder, it is observable that few of them, in Comparison, have been such as were born to Poverty, and who never knew any Thing but the Want and Pressures of that State. On the Contrary, they are generally such, as have been reduced from affluent or easy Circumstances, or from a too high Opinion of themselves, and their own Merits, have, from Disappointments, fallen into a peevish Discontent, and rather than be at the Pains of curbing their own Wills and Passions, have furiously hurried themselves out of Life, not considering, or not caring, what might be the Consequence. These Considerations should incite People to a due and prudent

dent Care of their Circumstances, lest being brought into Straits, and not knowing which Way to turn them, they become uneasy, and be tempted, in Order to avoid imaginary Evils, to plunge themselves into Misery irretrievable. And by the like Reflections, the Ambitious should take Care how far they proceed and set their Hearts upon great Things they have in View, lest, meeting with unexpected Disappointments, your Minds be so far hurried, as to be quite out of your own Power and Direction. For we find many Persons can better bear Guilt than Shame. This was verified in *Ahitophel*, an eminent Statesman of King *David's* Court. So renowned was he for Policy and Wisdom, that it is said, *the Counsel of Ahitophel, which he counselled in those Days, was as if a Man had enquired at the Oracle of God:*

Not

Not even the Resentment of different Parties could make them blind to his Abilities, for it is further added, *so was all the Counsel of Ahitophel, both with David, and with Absalom.* 2 Sam. xvi. 23. xvii. 1. &c. His conspiring against his Master, and joining with the Son in rebelling against the Father, though an Action full of Guilt, gave him no Disturbance: But when he found another's Counsel preferred to his, this his Pride and high Spirit could not bear. He was chafed in his Mind, *as a Bear robbed of her Whelps in the Field*; and because he could not revenge himself upon his Rival in Fame, his Rage recoiled upon himself. For *when Ahitophel saw that his Counsel was not followed, he saddled his Ass*; (himself, it is probable, did that Office, having his Spirits too much hurried to call or wait for his
Servant)

Servant) *and gat him Home to his House, to his City, and hanged himself and died.* But first, we are told, he *set his House in Order.* Wise enough, we find, he was in worldly Matters, but towards his God none more foolish. Both in public and family Affairs, his Prudence appeared; but of his Duty towards God, he seems altogether ignorant and unmindful. His Conduct is a strange Mixture of Wisdom and Madness. That which is most surprizing is, that he should have Presence of Mind enough to consider the Good of his Family, and *set his House in Order,* and yet be so mad at the same Time, as to disregard his own Welfare, and hang himself; should be so proud as not to bear a present Disgrace, when in a little Time the Counsel he gave would have appeared the Best.

We

We see in this how vain it is for a Man to be wise, if he be not wise towards his God. The Reputation this Man had for worldly Wisdom and Policy, betrayed him into an Action of the grossest Folly. If his Understanding had been but of common Rate, his Counsel not being followed had given him little Disturbance; but he could not, with any Patience, behold the Glory he had obtained, under any Eclipse, though but of the shortest Continuance. How easily may a Man, though naturally wise, be made weary of Life. Worldly Wisdom is no Protection from Shame and Ruin. A little Pain, a little Disgrace, a small Loss, a petty Affront, can now-a-days soon rob a Man of all Comfort, and cause his own Hands to rob him of himself. For the Credit of the Practice of *Self-Murder*, in the
History

History the Scripture gives us of *Four Thousand Years*, we meet with but *Four* Instances of it. The one of *Saul*, when forsaken by God, and that of his Armour Bearer, shocked with his Fate, and unwarrantably influenced by so great an Example; the Third of this Rebel to his Prince, who was of God's own Appointment; and the other of *Judas*, the Betrayer of his Master, *who was God manifest in the Flesh*. And though, indeed, there are but too many Examples of it amongst the Heathens, yet they were against their Rules, their Laws, and their Methods of Reasoning. And no Wonder is it, that such should be their Judgments, their Laws, and their Rules, for it is directly contrary to the sound Principles of right unprejudiced Reason. We will examine the Case fairly and impartially.

And

And, First, it is to be considered, whose we are. If we had made ourselves, we should have a most undoubted Right to dispose of and do by ourselves as we pleased. But this, I think, none of us will pretend to. That Being, therefore, whoever it was, that made us, must alone have that Power over us, and we shall act against Truth and Justice, if we invade his Right. Some have profanely said, that as they were brought into Being without their own Consents, that therefore they are at Liberty to quit it again when they please. But such should be told, that they have no Right to have such their Consent asked, because their Creator is the Author of all they have, of all their Powers and Faculties, even of those by which they thus dispute and question his Right, and consequently they can have no Pre-
tence

tence to exert them in any other Manner than is agreeable to his Will. When a Soldier is pressed into the Service, he does not pretend either that his natural Liberty is invaded, or that he has therefore a Right to desert the Station he is placed in by his Officer, because he is compelled to that Duty without his own Consent. As well knowing that the Safety of the Public is first to be considered, and that he, as a Member of it, is under a prior Obligation to do that Part towards the Support of it, which those who are intrusted with the State, think fit to call him to. And shall we then pretend to a greater Privilege as Creatures of God. He was the Creator of Man; the Former and Establisher of the grand Society of the World; and it was he by whose Influence and Direction all lesser Communities have been brought
into

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into the State they are. And shall we then think ourselves less obliged to remain in the Station God has thought fit to place us in, till he shall please to dismiss us, than a Soldier does that which is appointed him by his Commander? No. Our Obligations must still arise highest and stronger, in Proportion as our heavenly Father is infinitely superior to the greatest of the Sons of Men, than any Officer is or can be to the most inferior of those he commands.

Again, There is no Man, how low or inconsiderable soever his Station or Abilities may be, but may be of some Service to the Public; and every Man, by being born a Member of any Community, is obliged to do it all the Good he can. He, therefore, who violently rids
himself

himself of Life, is guilty of defrauding the Public, unjustly deprives it of that Benefit which he might have been of to it, and which it has an undoubted Right to demand from him.

But further, his Relations and Friends have a particular Interest in him, which he is bound in Justice to preserve to them as long as he can. They have a just Claim to his Love and Affection, as also to the natural Effects thereof, all the Aid and Assistance he can give them. How cruelly unjust is he to them then, who by shortening his Life, not only deprives them of that which with so much Equity they may expect from him, but leaves them in their Stead the utmost Grief and Sorrow, Infamy and Disgrace, without any Expectation, any Hope of his future Welfare. So wrong is such
a Prac-

a Practice, we see, upon the Principles of unassisted Reason. It is foolish in a Man to despise Life, since his Being is his all. Those who have a more noble and excellent Being, may slight ours, but it is against Nature for us to despise it ourselves, and bring ourselves to neglect it, and much more to destroy it. It is a Disease peculiar to Man; no other Creature is troubled with it; there is nothing which does not value and seek its own Preservation.

It was the Opinion of those two great Men in the Heathen World, *Plato* and *Aristotle*, that those Men, who, to get rid of Poverty, or any other Trouble or Hardship, put an End to their Lives, are so far from deserving the Character of being couragious, or of a noble Spirit, that they thereby shew themselves
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the veriest Cowards, and unmanly, and under the meanest Degree of Fear. For it is Weakness, to fly and avoid those Things which are hard and painful to be undergone. It is such a blind Fierceness, as though it may have with some a vain Shadow of Courage, yet will always pass for and be accounted Folly, in the Judgment of the wisest Men. That brave Roman *Regulus*, who rather than break his Oath, or lay violent Hands upon himself, exposed himself to the most exquisite Torments, was justly to be preferred to *Cato*, whose mean Pride, unjustly by some stiled greatness of Soul, would not suffer him to fall under the Power of his Enemy. And it may well be Matter of great Surprise, that one of the greatest Geniuses of the last Age, should ever think such an Action worthy that amiable
Light

Light he has set it in. If he could have foreseen the Mischief it has done since upon weak Minds, he would, I am persuaded, have suppressed his Design, though he had deprived himself of that great Reputation he has gained thereby. The best Excuse we can make for him, is, that as *Cato* was a Heathen, he might not apprehend there would be any Danger that Christians would be induced to copy after him, since the meanest Christian ought to be better instructed than the wisest Heathen.

And, indeed, would but Men attend to the Doctrines of their Religion, little Fear there would be of such an Effect. For it is one express Commandment of God, *Thou shalt do no Murder*. Whereby must be meant no Murder of any Kind, either of a Man's self or

others. For it is a known Rule in the Interpretation of Laws, that where the Law does not, there we are not to distinguish. And the Reason given by God for this Prohibition (*for in the Image of God made he Man*) holds as strongly against a Man's murdering himself, as against his murdering another. Since he who murders himself, as much destroys the Image of God, as he who murders any one else, consequently must equally offend against this Commandment.

This those unhappy People would do well to consider, who are not led into this Practice by any such proud and disdainful Humours, as those we have mentioned are influenced by; but by a Temper directly opposite. From a [rash Judgment, and too strict Notion of Things,

Things, they are brought to entertain such hard Thoughts of themselves, as to look upon themselves as quite unworthy of the Air they breath; as entirely out of the Favour of God; as excluded the Benefit of Man's Redemption. None do they regard so bad as themselves; all, but them, they imagine, may be saved by the Death and Merits of Christ; and, therefore, not being able to endure the present Horrors of their Minds, they most desperately endeavour to flee from the Anguish which now Torments them, by utterly destroying themselves, both Bodies and Souls. We cannot, without great Pity and Concern, consider the deplorable Circumstances of such Persons. *The Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infir- mity; but a wounded Spirit, who can bear; Reason and Religion, when duly exerted*

and attended to, will support a Man under, and carry him through, the greatest Evils and Troubles of Life. But when the Soul itself be affected, it is deaf to all which those great Guides suggest and teach; and as the bodily Power of Digestion, when vitiated, changes the most whulsome Food into Poison the most pernicious, so does the Soul, when under this Disorder, turn all the Lessons of Reason and Religion against itself; and that which affords the greatest Comfort to pious and understanding Minds, fills the clouded Soul with Terror and Despair. In vain will it be to direct our Discourse to such Persons. I hope none here present are of that Number. I shall now only offer some Considerations to our Thoughts, which, by the Blessing of God, if seriously reflected on, may prevent those
among

among us, who are of a gloomy and melancholy Turn, from falling into so miserable a State.

And, First, let them consider, *that Jesus Christ came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*: Not for the Good did he lay down his Life, but for Sinners: And, therefore, as they look upon themselves as great Sinners, they should regard themselves as the very Persons for whom he died. But as indeed *there is no Man that doth Good and sinneth not*, so all have stood in Need of a Saviour and Redeemer. And therefore he came into the World, and submitted to the Death of the Cross, that he might bring about the Redemption and Salvation of all Men. None are excepted, we may observe, who will lay hold of it, and perform the Conditions

upon which it is offered. And what are they? None, but what every Man is enabled to do, if he will but heartily set about it, through the Assistance of God's divine Spirit, which he hath promised, and which will never be wanting to those who pray for it, and will co-operate with it. They are Conditions easy to be understood, agreeable to Reason, perfective of our Nature, conducive to our present Ease and well being, making us amiable in the Sight of God, and securing to us his most precious Love and Favour to all Eternity.

We are first to believe and put our Trust in him; to give our Assent to what he has taught us, and rest in his Promises. And can any Thing be more right and just than that we should credit what our Creator says, and put our
Confidence

Confidence in him for our future Happiness, to whom we owe our very Being, and all we now enjoy? We are further to observe, that he originally intended us for happy Beings, and well knowing, how inconsistent with our proving such all Sin and Wickedness would be, and how alone conducive thereto, Virtue and Goodness are, he requires us to forsake the former, and give ourselves up entirely to the Practice of the other, as the Means absolutely necessary to the compassing the End designed. And what more reasonable could be demanded of us, than to break off those Sins which renders us unhappy to ourselves, and odious to him; and for the future engage in such a Course of Life, as will both make us amiable in his Sight, and secure our Happiness both here and hereafter?

And will any Man suffer himself to be uneasy any longer? Must not these glad Tidings clear away and dispel the most gloomy Thoughts, and chear and enliven Spirits the most melancholy and dejected? When Happiness is thus held forth and presented to us by a most merciful Creator and gracious Redeemer, can we be such Enemies to ourselves as to put it from us, and perversely judge ourselves unworthy of it, when, by having his Death and Merits imputed to us, we are become just before God, and declared worthy Objects of his Grace. Let us take heed to ourselves, and to avoid the Extremes on either Side. To despair is on the one hand being as unjust to God, as without Faith, Repentance and Reformation, it is to presume upon his Mercy and Favour on the other. He can no more refuse to receive

— receive the truly repenting Sinner to himself, than he can admit the obstinately Impenitent. Consider these Things, ye beloved of God, and never in the least hearken to that Temptation, which will entangle you in that Sin which admits of no Repentance, as is most certainly the Case of Self-Murder. For upon Death, all our Power to set Things right ceaseth. *There is no Wisdom, nor Understanding, nor Knowledge in the Grave*, whither we shall then be gone: *As the Tree falleth, so shall it lie.* This Life is our only Time for doing what will avail us hereafter; that which succeeds is the Season for Reward or Punishment; it will then be out of our Power to repair what we have done amiss, and, consequently, if we die in the Commission of Sin (and every Self-Murderer dies in the very Act of a most heinous

nous Sin) we die without Repentance, and without Repentance there is no Remission; and therefore, upon the Principles of the Gospel, every Sinner who dies in any Sin unrepented of, and consequently every Self-Murderer, can have no Hopes of Salvation, but may well expect that he shall be excluded Heaven, as by the Laws of his Country he is forbidden the common Rights of Burial. And, O! how dreadful will it be, when he thus unsent for rushes into the Creator's Presence, and is asked, *Friend, wherefore art thou come?* to find himself rejected by his God, and consigned over to utter Darkness, *where is weeping and gnashing of Teeth.*

Let us all, finally, whenever we be pressed with Difficulties, or encompassed with Misfortunes, consider the Case of
Job.

Job. He was one Day the greatest Man of the East, and yet quickly reduced to such a State of Misery and Wretchedness, as for his Poverty to become a Proverb, "As poor as *Job*." He lost all that he had, and his Children too; but he wisely took Care not also to loose himself. His Expostulation in my Text will be always remembered to his Praise and Honour. What? says he, *shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil?* How can we tell what Purposes divine Wisdom may have in View, by the Distress and Troubles he suffers us to be tried with? He may intend to make us Examples for others, and that our Faith may be found in the Day of the Lord, laudable, glorious, and honourable, to the Encrease of Glory and endless Felicity. We are to call to Mind that the blessed Jesus himself ascended not first

up to Joy, till he had endured Pain; not even **HE** entered into his Glory, before he was crucified. And what are our Afflictions, who are Sinners, when compared with his, *in whom was no Sin?* Our Way to eternal Joy, is patiently to suffer as he did. Never was Sorrow like unto his Sorrow, and yet he never repined, though *for our Transgressions he was smitten.* And shall we then pretend to set Bounds to the divine Will, and say, "Thus much will I bear, and no more?" Or dare insolently to resolve, that if those Evils which now press us, be not removed, or have any further Addition made to them, we will rather die than bear them? I hope none of us will ever suffer ourselves to be carried away to such impious Impatience, but support our drooping and desponding Thoughts, by reflecting on the happy
Consequence

Consequence of our pious Resignation to the Will of God. All the Evil which can happen to us, is not to be compared with the Good we have received, and much less with the Good which is reserved for us in the other World. On that let us all have our Eyes for ever fixed, and we shall say with St. Paul, *the Light of Afflictions of this World, which are but for a Moment, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory, which shall be revealed in us; which shall be hereafter made manifest and displayed before the Eyes of the whole World, at our Admittance into it. And yet that exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, they will work for us, whilst we look not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things, which are not seen; since the Things which are seen are temporal, but the Things which are not seen are eternal.* Now to the only
 wise

wife God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
be ascribed, as is most justly due, of us
and all Men, all Dominion and Power,
Love, Honour, Obedience, Praise and
Thanksgiving, both now, and through
succeeding Periods of Time, to all Eter-
nity. *Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

T H E

HENIOUS SIN of SWEARING
D E M O N S T R A T E D.

P R E A C H E D A T

St. JOHN'S MADDERMARKEET,
and St. PETER'S MANCROFT.

. DECEMBER the 28th, 1746.

J E R E M I A H xxiii. 10.

Because of Swearing the Land mourneth.

THIS is declared to be now our
Case, by the Act of Parliament
you have read to you, and, unless speedily
and effectually put a Stop to, may
justly provoke the divine Vengeance to
increase

increase the many Calamities these Nations already labour under. The Prophet *Isaiab* declares, *when God's Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.* This he spoke of the Children of *Israel*, whom he elsewhere calls *a Sinful Nation; a People laden with Iniquity; a Seed of Evil Doers; Children that were Corrupters; who had forsaken the Lord; had provoked the Holy One of Israel; were gone backward, or alienated and separated from God.* Yet, even these, the Prophet thought, might be reclaimed by Judgments.

What then are we, the wretched People of this Land! We have long had the divine Judgments amongst us. Our Country has been harassed with foreign Enemies; our Land, Strangers have devoured it in our Presence; and what is still

still more afflicting, some from amongst ourselves proved so base and ungrateful, as to join them to distress and ruin us. Yet, what Effect has all this had upon us! Are we in any Measure become better than we were? Is Justice in Dealing, Sincerity in Conversation, or true Piety in our religious Duties, more generally observed than they were wont to be? Happy is it for all those, who laying their Hands upon their Breasts, and carefully examining their late Conduct, can truly say each to himself, “ In all
 “ my Commerce since with Mankind,
 “ I have resisted all the Temptations to
 “ Fraud and Deceit—I have made Res-
 “ titution of all that I have wronged
 “ People of—I have been particularly
 “ cautious with Relation to that Sin es-
 “ pecially, to which I am most addicted,
 “ or to which I am, by my Station in
 “ Life,

“ Life, most exposed—I have kept a
“ constant Watch before the Door of my
“ Lips, that I might not offend in
“ Word—and as to the Duties of Reli-
“ gion, I have set God always before
“ me—I have performed them as in his
“ immediate Presence — with a pious
“ and devout Heart have sent up my
“ Devotions to the Throne of Grace,
“ having never any Thing else in View
“ in all my Addresses, but the Glory of
“ God, my own Improvement in Piety
“ Virtue, and the qualifying myself for
“ that eternal State which God, in his
“ Mercy, has ultimately designed to
“ make me Partaker of.” Happy, I
say, are those who can thus speak Peace
to their Souls. But still, as a Nation, we
are not clear of Sins highly displeasing to
Almighty God, loathsome and offensive
to every true Christian, and attended
neither

neither with Profit nor Pleasure to the Offenders themselves. I mean those horrid, impious and execrable Vices of profane Cursing and Swearing; for the preventing of which, for the future, we should join with our Legislators, and use our utmost Endeavours to discountenance and suppress them; for, *for these Things the Land mourneth*; for this Cause *his Anger* is not yet turned away from us, but his Hand is stretched out still to threaten and punish us.

To this may very justly be ascribed, that contagious Distemper, which has for some Time, and does now prevail in several Parts of this Kingdom, amongst the larger Kind of Cattle, and has made its Approaches towards us, too near not to make us apprehensive of the Consequences. We are apt, indeed, not to be moved,

moved, till Calamities come Home to our Doors, and we ourselves be touched. But surely it must be owing to a Want of considering our own Circumstances in this Country, that we now seem to be so little affected by those great Evils which threaten us. Many of our poor Neighbours, if not quite ruined, have nevertheless suffered great Losses, and been heavily distressed by certain Worms or Cankers which have already destroyed much of the Fruits of the Ground, and which, if not by the Mercy of God quickly removed, it is much to be feared will join with that contagious Distemper, in bringing upon us the Famine, Pestilence, and all those dreadful Evils which follow close at the Heels of those terrible Judgments of God. And then what shall we be able to do, when we be at once visited with those four severe
Judg-

Judgments of God, the Sword, and the
Famine, and the noisome Beasts, and the
Pestilence, to cut off from us Man and
Beast! It will be too late then to knock,
when the Door shall be shut; and too
late to cry for Mercy, when it be the
Time for Justice. The present is the only
Time, wherein we can ward off, if yet it
be not already too late, those grievous
Calamities which seem just ready to en-
compass us. Let us not then any longer
neglect the Means, the only Means we
have to that blessed Purpose. A sincere
Repentance for what is past, and a hear-
ty Amendment for the Time to come,
we must not any longer put off or defer,
if we would either enjoy the good
Things of this Life, or be accounted
worthy to be made Partakers of that
Happiness, which our Heavenly Father
keeps in Reserve for those who unfeign-
edly

edly endeavour to recommend themselves to his Approbation and Favour.

Our Governors, in the Law they have made, mention only those Vices of profane Cursing and Swearing, as being more open and commonly taken Notice of by others, and also more productive of Evils, and fatal in its Consequences, as well to Society in general, as to the Persons themselves who are guilty of it. For common Swearing tends in its own Nature to take off that Reverence which ought to be had to an Oath, and to lessen in Mens esteem the Obligation which it most certainly lays upon the Conscience: and that, especially, when it be practised by Persons of superior Stations, and who are known to be and regarded as Men of Sense and Judgment. For an Oath given in common Conversation, is

as binding in itself, as when pronounced in a Court, with the greatest Solemnity. And therefore when Men see such Persons venting Oaths upon all Occasions, some Times to Things which they themselves know to be false; at other Times to do a Service, which they quickly perceive they take no further Thought about, they will soon be brought, by such Examples, to think that they likewise need not be much concerned about them; that they have at least as much Liberty to indulge themselves in the same Vice, and to act, or not, according to their Oaths, as their Humour or Interest shall at any Time require.

And when this comes to be commonly the Case, as from a frequent Practice we see it does, where shall we then find another Bond upon the Conscience,
when

when Oaths shall be thus despoiled of their Force and Efficacy? By what Means shall our Government then secure the Allegiance of its Members? We have experienced lately, but too many Instances of the little Regard paid to them in this Respect; chiefly owing, I doubt not, to common Swearing, and the irreverend and profane Manner, in which such Oaths are frequently spoken of, and that too often by Persons, who are thoroughly sensible of their Obligation.

Again. In Trials at the Bar, what Justice is to be expected; what Regard to Truth to be reasonably looked for, from Persons accustomed to Oaths, upon every the most slight, or even no Occasion at all? Can we suppose that he, who scarce passes a Day, without frequently

quently forswearing himself in common Conversation, will become, on a Sudden, so very scrupulous as to refuse prostituting his Conscience for a handsome Present, or from Friendship to one of the Parties, or Enmity to the Others? And when this becomes the Case, how shall we preserve Liberty and Property? What Credit is a Judge or Jury to give to Witnesses? All Business must be carried on with Distrust and Diffidence; and when Men be sentenced to lose their Lives or their Fortunes, we shall not have the Satisfaction of being sure they are Guilty, but rather be in constant Terror ourselves of the like Fate, should we chance to incur the Displeasure, or should it happen to be the Interest of our Neighbour to pursue us to those Extremities.

That this is no improbable an Effect to be expected from such a Practice, we have the Judgment of a very wise Man amongst the *Jews*; "False Swearing," *says he*, "naturally springeth out of much Swearing;" and "he that Swareth," *saitb St. Cbrysoftom*, "continually, both willingly and unwillingly, both ignorant-ly and knowingly, both in Earnest and in Sport, being often transported by Anger, and many other Things, will frequently forswear." No wonder then our Government should think this a Matter of such Importance, as to make them send forth a new Law, for the more effectual putting a Stop to a Practice so dangerous and pernicious, as we see it is to Society; and to order it to be solemnly read in our Congregations, that no Persons may pretend Ignorance of it, but be put in Mind of the great Evil and Sinfulness

S E R M O N IV. III

Sinfulness of it, both to themselves and others.

It remains now upon us, to take Care that it be put in Execution. And the best Way of doing this, is for every one of us to begin with himself first. Those of us, who upon Reflection find themselves but too much addicted to it, let them for the future seriously consider how unworthy it is in them, to be thus continually offending against both the Laws of God and Man; but especially if they be placed above the common Rank of their fellow Creatures. As they are seated above, so should they excel the rude Vulgar, by a civil, courteous, and obliging Behaviour; by a generous, noble and inoffensive Deportment; not ungratefully affronting that God, who hath been so bountiful to them; nor defeat-

ing or disappointing the Service and Support their Prince and Government may justly expect from them, by such a mean and scandalous Behaviour; not depriving their Friends of that chearful and instructive Conversation, which they are so well able to give them, by pestering them instead thereof with Language so grating to the Ear, so fretful to the Heart, and breaking in upon, in so outrageous a Manner, all good Sense and good Breeding.

Nor let others think themselves below a proper Care in this Matter; but let them be fired with such a just and laudable Spirit, as Christians, to account it a Thing greatly beneath them, to give into a Practice so unbecoming a Creature endued with Reason. It debaseth the very meanest Man infinitely below himself;

Self; and if he be careful in this Respect, he raiseth himself thereby above the Greatest, who is Guilty of it. For, indeed, it is the Behaviour which makes the Gentleman; and he has a much better Title to that Compellation, who behaves himself decently and worthily upon every Occasion, than a Man of the highest Birth, whose Conversation belie the Family he springs from. And herein it is, that Nature preserveth still an Equality amongst us; and the wisest and the best of Men, whose Esteem we must all own is of the greatest Value, regard those with the truest Respect who behave well in their Station, of what Rank or Order soever it be. There is the *great* Vulgar as well as the *small*; and that is a Difference little worth regarding, when Place or Wealth only is the Thing which makes the Distinction.

But all those should further consider, that by profane Cursing and Swearing they are performing the Devil's Service without any Wages, and that unless they can give us better Evidence of the Pleasure arising from it, than they have hitherto done, we must think they have as little of that, as of Profit from it. And who is there in his Senses, who would dare to offend his Creator; deprive himself of eternal Happiness, and expose himself to endless Misery, for the Sake of doing what has neither Pleasure nor Profit attending it; what must make a Man, upon Reflection, mean and despicable in his own Eyes, and odious, and to be avoided by all who know him? And yet this is and must be the unhappy Fate of all who accustom themselves to these Vices.

However,

However, those of them, who are not quite abandoned, and are not become incorrigibly profane and wicked, all deserve our Pity and Concern, and call for and demand our Endeavours to assist, correct and amend them; and this, first of all, in the Spirit of Meekness, with all the Art and Address we are capable of exerting. For we are to observe, it is not so much the Intent or Desire of our Governors, that Offenders should be punished and exposed to Shame, as it is to correct and amend them, and put a Stop to the Vices they condemn. And, first, we should consider what Manner of Spirit such Persons are generally of; how apt to take Offence upon the slightest Occasion; how quickly they are fired with Passion, and how soon they then lose the entire Mastery of themselves. Those, therefore, who are about such Persons,

F 4

should

should avoid as much as possible doing or speaking any Thing, which they know may be at all likely to provoke them, or put them off their Guard. Or, if any such Thing should unawares slip from them, not aggravate the Matter, as the Manner of some is; but either by a seasonable Silence, or a kind Withdrawing, leave them to recover themselves; and then after they are calm and sedate, and capable of Advice, with Prudence let them into a Knowledge of themselves, make them, by just Degrees, sensible of their Folly and Impiety, and by that Means render them so sensible of them, that they themselves shall become their own Accusers and Reformers. If these charitable Methods were taken by Peoples Friends and Acquaintance, we should have little Occasion, I am well perswaded, for any public Informations and Prosecutions.

cutions. For the Failings of most Men in this Respect, are owing to the faulty and imprudent Conduct of others; and there are few, but have that good Sense naturally inherent in their Minds, that they only want to be brought to reflect upon their Conduct, to make them see and be ashamed of being Guilty of those foul Vices.

But as for those, who, after all these Methods used upon them, still wilfully persist in the Practice of those Vices; either from a certain Vanity to terrify and affrighten those about them, by puffing up their Discourse with Curses and Oaths; or, from a profane and wicked Spirit daringly insult the Divinity itself, such deserve no Quarter from us, but we should take Care, as we love the Honour of God, and regard the Welfare of Society, to bring them to the Shame and Punish-

ment they deserve, put the Laws in Execution upon them; that, *however for Swearing the Land may mourn, we may, by such our Zeal, deliver our own Souls.* This would be proceeding upon proper Motives; not from Vanity or ill Nature, or some worse Principle, but from a just Concern and Reverence for the Name of our God, and a becoming Ambition to free our Country from such a base and dishonourable Practice, so unworthy the human Race, so superlatively disgraceful to Christians, and thereby ward off those dreadful Evils which are but too justly to be apprehended from it.

In this Time of Joy and Gladness, when we be commemorating the greatest Blessing Mankind had ever conferred upon them, it may be, perhaps by some, reckoned unreasonable thus to cast a
Damp

Damp upon our Minds, by Threatenings of Judgments and Calamities as ready to fall upon us. But if we will but consider the Matter rightly, we shall find what has been said, very well deserving our Thoughts at this Season. Our Government have not thought it a Time improper to read the Law about it. And, indeed, when we call to Mind how much Persons are apt to be off their Guard in these Times of Feasting and Banqueting, perhaps there will not be found a better Season for these Cautions than the present, to make them more particularly careful and watchful over their Conduct. And we are further to consider that wonderful Act of Mercy, which we now express our Joy, and bless God for, will not be such to us, unless we put away every Thing that is offensive to him, behave ourselves towards

him with a becoming Awe and Reverence; make use of his Name, and every Thing belonging to him, with just Solemnity and Regard, and in every other Respect live according to his Laws, to the utmost of our Power. For, unless we resolve thus to behave ourselves, we may be surprized with Judgments in the Midst of our Mirth and Jollity, and be involved in Calamities, when we promised to ourselves nothing but Ease and Pleasure. But if on the Contrary, *whether we eat or drink*, in all our Words and Actions, *we do all to the Glory of God*, the Father of an infinity Majesty, his honourable, true, and only Son, also the Holy Ghost the Comforter; behave always as in the Presence of this divine Being, making his Commands the Rules of our Conduct, we shall then rejoice in the Ways of our Lord, in the Manner
that

that we ought to do, and as becomes the Disciples of Christ; and on that Account have our very Diversions here heightened and encreased; and having enjoyed a Kind of Paradise in this World, find ourselves, upon our Dissolution, translated to perfect and endless Happiness hereafter. Which God, of his infinite Mercy, grant may be the happy Lot of all who hear me this Day, for the Sake of him, who, though God blessed for ever, did not abhor the Virgin's Womb, that he might redeem us by his most precious Blood, from all Sin and Misery; to whom be Glory and Honour, now and for ever more. *Amen.*

S E R M O N V.

CHRIST the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE.

Preached at the CATHEDRAL, and
St. PETER'S MANCROFT,

On SUNDAY, the First of MAY, 1748.

Being *St. Philip* and *St. James's-Day*.

JOHN xiv. 6.

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, and
the Truth, and the Life: No Man cometh
unto the Father, but by me.*

THIS whole Chapter consists, and is
a Mixture of Consolation, of Doc-
trine, of Exhortations, and of Promises.
Our Lord comforts his Disciples, who
were now under great Perplexity and
Trouble of Mind: "He teacheth them
of

of the Father; exhorteth them to believe in himself; to love him and keep his Commandments:" And, as an Encouragement to them to follow his Advice, "He promises them the Assistance of the Holy Ghost; that he will always favourably hear their Prayers; will return unto them himself, and in the final Consummation of all Things, receive them into Glory;" *that where he is, they might be also.*

What precious and seasonable Promises were these! But no more, indeed, than were necessary at that Time, when all their ambitious Expectations were to be frustrated; when their Master, who, they vainly hoped, was at that Time to free them from the Power of the *Romans*, and restore again the Kingdom to *Israel*, should quickly, in their
Sight,

Sight, be reduced to the utmost Distress and Misery; be the Object of the Contempt and Scorn of his Enemies, and be put by them to a most cruel and ignominious Death; and themselves confounded by the Treachery of one of their own Brethren, not knowing whom to trust, nor where to fly, affrighted, dispirited and scattered. Most affectionately, therefore did this great Lover of Souls provide for the Temptations they would so soon be assaulted with, and furnish them with Matter, where-with, after the first Ruffle was over, they might recollect themselves, and compose their distracted Thoughts.

In my Text we have contained the whole Sum and Substance of the Gospel. It is our blessed Lord's Answer to *St. Thomas*, who wanted to know whither
he

he was going the Way. To which our Lord does not directly and fully reply, but omits nothing, which it was profitable for him and the Rest of the Disciples to know. It was necessary to check and keep within due Bounds, his and their Curiosity; an Humour but too apt to be excessive and predominate in the Mind of Man, and which we find, the Blessed Jesus, who knew what was in Man, always avoided gratifying, where it could be of no Service to them, but only tended to sooth and feed their Vanity. Our Lord, therefore, we may observe, does not here speak of himself, or describe what was to be his Condition with the Father; though *St. Thomas* would gladly have hearkened to such a Speculation; but he turns his Thoughts to that which was of more Moment to him and all other Christians, viz. to the Means, whereby

whereby they might make themselves Partakers of a happy Resurrection. This, those who had Christ would be enabled to do; since he is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; from him we are to begin; in him we must proceed and end. He is the true and living Way to eternal Life. The imitating his Example, and obeying his Commands, is the Way, the only Way, to go where he is gone. For such will he direct and draw to him. This our blessed Saviour foresaw was a Doctrine very necessary to be inculcated, and therefore we may find many Passages in Holy Scripture, to the like Purpose.

When the Sacred Writings came to be neglected, and the Influence which the Gospel was wont to have upon Men's Minds began to abate, we see in Ecclesiastical History, that after the Persecution

tion by the Emperor *Decius*, in the Third Century, some Christians, moved rather by worldly Craft and Policy, than by any true Piety and Wisdom, instituted several new Festivals, accompanied with such Rites and Ceremonies, as were observed among the Heathens in theirs; by these Means they hoped to bring over the Heathens; and indeed Christians did thereby increase in Number, but they declined in Virtue. Feasting and other Diversions procured many Profelytes, and many of the greatest Men among them were not displeased with the Humour and Zeal it raised amongst them. They made most pompous Orations to the Honour of Spirits and Martyrs, and celebrated the pretended Miracles wrought at their Sepulchres, and by their Relicks, being not without Hopes, it is probable, and by the

the Event they were not disappointed, that the same People, who honoured and worshiped departed Spirits, would likewise do the same by them, when they also should be dead and gone; it may, perhaps, be too much to say, that it infamed some even to Martyrdom; so dangerous is a Departure from the Gospel, to Christians the most zealous, for what they imagine is to promote the Glory and Honour of God. Now the setting apart Times for commemorating the several Steps of the wonderful Work of our Redemption, and returning God Thanks for enabling our Blessed Saviour's Disciples and Apostles, so successfully to accomplish the Offices committed to them, to the enlightening us of the Heathen World, and bringing us thereby into the Way of Salvation, may serve to very good Ends and Purposes; but then

then it behoves us to take Care that we fall not into those Errors, in which our Forefathers were involved and insnared. They grew so fond of the Apostles and Saints, that they became unmindful of him, whose Commission they bore, and by whose Authority and Power alone they acted: Or they addressed themselves to them, as if they likewise, as well as he, were Mediators and Intercessors with God. To them they directed their Prayers; to them they raised Images and Altars; and to them they paid their Adoration and Worship.

But our Blessed Saviour in my Text cautions us against any such erroneous and idolatrous Practices; telling us, that he alone *is the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; that no Man can come unto the Father, but by him. He is the alone Me-
diator

diator between God and Man. For as he alone gave himself a Ransom for all; so it is his Concern only to present our Prayers to God and interceed with him to have them accepted. He has Merit to plead, which none besides, either Angel or Saint has; and therefore he alone is, or can be qualified for that high and important Office of Intercessor, or Mediator and Saviour; and consequently every Part of that Office, which we ascribe to any other Being, is an impious Derogation from him; is a Denial indeed of the Lord that bought us; is a Rejection of him the Head; is making to ourselves other Lords and Saviours; is nothing else than an Exclusion of ourselves from the Benefit of what he did and suffered for us: Nothing less than a shutting too the Door of Heaven against us. For Christ alone
is

is the Way thither; by the Doctrine he has taught us, pointing out the Path we are to take; by his Example going before us therein; by his Merits clearing away all Obstructions, and as the Prophet expresses it, *taking us by the Arms*, guiding and supporting us to our Journey's End. He alone is *the Truth* or Word of Truth; he is the Substance, of which the antient Promises were the Foretellers; of which the legal Rites and Ceremonies were but the Types and Shadows: He is the true Guide to that heavenly Canaan, of which the Earthly was but a faint Representation, and of whom *Moses* and *Joshua* the Leaders into that fruitful Land, are honoured with like Characters, because they brought the *Israelites* out of their *Egyptian* Bondage, as the Blessed Jesus does his faithful Servants from that worst of Servitude,

vitute, the Slavery of Sin and Death. By his Assension into Heaven he triumphed over it, and over him also, who had the Power over it; i. e. the Devil. All our Enemies are now conquered. They have now no more Power than what we ourselves shall give them over us. Our Way is open to the Father; if we do but follow our Bleffed Guide without deviating either to the right Hand or to the left, our Journey will end in perfect Rest, Joy and Happiness.

Indeed for the Collect for this Day's Service, we say, "that following the Steps of the holy Apostles, *St. Philip* and *St. James*, we may stedfastly walk in the Way that leadeth to eternal Life;" and in some other Collects we use Expressions of the like Import. But in all those Cases

Cases we are supposed to mean no more than what *St. Paul* exhorts us to, when he says, *Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ*. We are not to set up, or make the Apostles or Saints our Patterns or Examples upon their own Accounts, but only in those Respects, in which they followed Christ. They are proposed to us, as so many Incentives or Encouragements, to a like religious and christian Demeanour, under all the Vicissitudes and Trials we may meet with in our spiritual Warfare; that, seeing the same encountered, undergone and surmounted, by Men like ourselves, we might be convinced that God's Assistance will likewise ever be at Hand, to assist and support us in our hearty Endeavours to serve, and approve ourselves to him upon all Occasions. But no Pattern, no Example is there like that of our

bleſſed Saviour. As all others were Men, only of a mortal and weak Nature, ſo are their Examples, agreeable thereto, wanting and imperfect. We are apt to look upon them as very extraordinary, and ſo they were indeed, when compared with ourſelves ; but, when ſet in View with that of the Bleſſed Jeſus, they are precarious and defective. Bright and ſplendid appear the Moon and Stars, when all be Darkneſs around them ; but when the Sun ariſe in his Glory, they vaniſh and are gone ; and as he who travels by the Dim and uncertain Light of thoſe leſſer Luminaries, will diſcover at the Sun's returning, many Slips and Deviations, which, had he had the Benefit of its Light, he would have avoided ; ſo he who propoſes the Lives only of the Saints, for the Patterns of his Conduct, may be more likely, perhaps,
to

to fall into their Errors, than equal them in their Excellencies. And, therefore, as he who writes after the fairest Copy, will most probably draw nearer to Perfection in the Art of Writing, than he who imitates a less excellent Hand, so shall we be most likely to equal the past Heroes of Christianity, in those Things, for which we most deservedly admire them ; if we, as they did, propose to ourselves that perfect Example, by following which they themselves became so eminent.

In the Old Testament, we find recorded many Men, who were in their Generations highly esteemed in the Sight both of God and Man. *Enoch* and *Abraham* ; *Moses* and *Elias* ; *Daniel* and the *Prophets* ; and many others which we ourselves will easily recollect. But

none are proposed as Patterns for a thorough Imitation ; all are represented as having their Defects and Failings : God alone is the Example given for Men to follow. *Be ye Holy, for the Lord your God is Holy* ; is the Precept delivered by *Moses*.

And as there is a Connection, an Analogy, Proportion and Resemblance, between all the several Revelations exhibited to Mankind, so is the same to be observed in this Particular. *Ye believe in God ; believe also in me*, says our Blessed Saviour. You have hitherto, or should have testified your Belief in God, by making him your Example, so far as you knew him. By appearing now in your own Nature, I have manifested myself more to you ; I have set before you a perfect Pattern of every Virtue
✓ and

and Grace. You are now to follow me ; to tread in my Steps ; to do upon every Occasion, what I have recommended to you.

I wish I could describe and set this Example before you in all its divine Lustre and Excellency ; but that is not in the Power of any Mortal, of any Language to do. The Sacred Writings contain all that Words can express, or Man conceive ; therein we have an Account of the benign and amiable Behaviour of our Blessed Lord, upon all Occasions ; the constant Readiness and Chearfulness with which he went about doing good ; the unwearied Pains he took to instruct the Ignorant, undeceive and set right the Deluded, and reclaim Sinners from the Error of their Ways. In those heavenly Volumes, we behold him combat-

ing the Prejudices of his Creatures; contending with their Passions and Humours; struggling with their Perverseness and Obstinacy: Exerting his Almighty Power to cure their Diseases, to supply their Wants, to convince their Minds: Even exposing his Reputation to Obloquy and Scandal, rather than forego an Opportunity of doing good. And when, instead of meeting with the Returns which he might justly have expected from the Exertion of so much Goodness, he met with nothing but evil for good, and hatred for his good Will, after patiently submitting to all the Taunts and Revilings, the most barbarous and cruel Usage from those very Persons whom he endeavoured to serve, he laid down his Life for them, without which they could not be saved; blessing them whilst they cursed, and praying
ing

ing for them, whilst they persecuted him most despitefully, and crucified him.

Such is the Example of our Blessed Redeemer, as recorded in the sacred Writings. But, yet all this, though not to be paralleled by any Mortal, does not sufficiently set forth that boundless Love which the Blessed Jesus, *God manifest in Flesh*, had for Mankind. He was the *Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World*. Ere Man was created, his Redemption was resolved upon. But what Heart can conceive, what Tongue utter the Greatness of such Love. It is as much above our Comprehension, as our Power in Words to express it. We must, therefore wait, till with *St. Paul* we be *caught up to the Third Heaven*, and there be furnished with those *unspeak-*

able Words, which it is not possible for Mortal Man to utter.

And can we then think of any other Example for our Imitation, than this most perfect one, which God himself hath set us? We should henceforth surely determine with the same blessed Apostle, *not to know any Thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*: Not to follow any other Pattern, but that which he himself hath recommended and enjoined us. Some Men we, indeed, honour and distinguish with the Title of Saints, of holy and good Men; but if we mean by those Words, what only they deserve, and what alone we are allowed to ascribe to them, we must only speak comparatively; for so to stile them in a positive or absolute Sense, is not true, or to be permitted; *there is none good but one, that is God*. When
compared

compared with us, or the Generality of Mankind, they may, perhaps, well deserve that high Title; but with Respect to God they are Sinners; with him who chargeth even his Angels with Folly, they themselves cannot be justified without having the Merits of our Saviour's Death and Sufferings imputed to them. He alone, of all who have been born of a Woman, was clean and pure from all Defilement. *He was without Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth;* and therefore *St. Peter* mentions him, as the *Example*, as the Being, *whose Steps we are to follow.* It becomes us to value and esteem the Memories of the Saints, as we should the Memories of all Men, who have been in any singular Manner serviceable to Mankind, and Promoters of the Honour of God; but those shew very little Respect to them, who

now persecute such as resemble them. For it is observable, that they who honour them as Gods, treat those as the worst of Men, who act as they did; such Men may pretend as much as they please, to reverence the Memories of the Saints, and say, as the *Jews* in our blessed Saviour's Time did, *If we had been in the Days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Martyrs*; yet, whilst they torture and put to Death the Successors of those holy Men, they are Witnesses unto themselves, that they are the Children of them who killed those Saints; they approve themselves their genuine Offspring, by being like them, and imitating their Wickedness, Cruelty and Idolatry.

The

The Manner wherein our Church directeth us to honour the Saints and celebrate their Memories, is the utmost they could be pleased with, and more than they would desire, if they were sensible of what we are doing here below. They know of no Works of Supererogation, fondly ascribed to them by their Votaries: They know of nothing they have done for the Sake of God and his Truth, but what they were in Duty obliged to, and are ready to say to their blessed Lord and Master, *we are unprofitable Servants*. They know of no Merit they have to plead for themselves, and much less for others; and are so far from presuming to mediate or intercede for others, that they piously, and in the deepest Humility of Soul, depend upon the Merits and Mediation of Christ, for their own Salvation. How shocked would they be to

see that Honour and Worship paid to them, which is due to the Saviour only; and could they be heard, would cry out to their Worshippers, as the Apostles *Paul* and *Barnabas* did to those, who were going to sacrifice to them, *Sirs, why do ye these Things; we also were Men of like Passions with you, and preach unto you in our Writings, that ye should turn from these Vanities unto the living God, even your and our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier: Or, as the Angel did to St. John, when he was falling down before him; " See you " do not these Things by any Means; " for we are your fellow Servants, and " of your Brethren, the Disciples of " Christ; worship God. To him only " is the Adoration due, which you most " impiously pay to us. The Example " he set you, whilst as a Man he conversed " upon Earth, is what you should follow.*

" That

“ That is perfect and all sufficient; no
 “ Flaw, no Defect is there in it. We,
 “ alas! were but Men; frail and imper-
 “ fect as our Natures; and what we did,
 “ was but a faint, very faint Imitation and
 “ Shadow of that glorious Pattern he ex-
 “ hibited. He was pleased most gracious-
 “ ly to accept our Endeavours, and so he
 “ will yours, if you serve and adore him
 “ alone, and worship him in Sincerity and
 “ Truth.” Such Reproof, such Advice
 would they give their deluded Worship-
 pers, could they but be sensible of their
 idolatrous Adoration of them; but as
 they are not, the worship of them is as
 foolish, as it is impious.

One would think it were impossible,
 were it not the Practice of a Church of
 large Extent, which calls herself, indeed,
 with neither Sense nor Truth, both Ca-
 tholick

tholick and infallible ; I say, one would think it otherwise impossible, that any Set of Christians, at all acquainted with the Sacred Writings, should ever give into such an idolatrous Practice ; a Crime against which one of the Ten Commandments is expressly levelled, and of which God so often declares his Detestation and Abhorrence ; nay, against which the Saints themselves, thus worshipped, caution us. It is *St. Paul's* Precept, *Flee from Idolatry*. And *St. John* closeth his most divine Epistle, in this affectionate Manner ; *Little Children, keep yourselves from Idols*. Having always in his Mind, as it were, the Angel's Admonition to himself. *See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow Servant, and of thy Brethren that have the Testimony of Jesus ; worship God*.

Short

Short is the Account we have of the two Apostles we this Day commemorate, and return God thanks for. But their Labours in the Gospel, and sealing the Truth they preached with their Blood, are sufficient to recommend them to our just Esteem; they deserve our Encomiums and Applause. For to praise Persons eminent for their Services to Mankind, is but to bestow on them the just Reward of their Merit towards us; it is no more than what Reason, the unalterable Rules of Justice, and the strongest Ties of Gratitude oblige us to; it is an Encouragement to Virtue, and thereby our own, and the common Interest of Mankind is promoted. While they are on this Side the Grave, they may, and ought to enjoy other Advantages, besides the Credit and Esteem of their Piety and Virtue; but after their Deaths,

succeeding

ſucceeding Generations, who experience the happy Effects of wiſe, generous, and beneficent Minds, can expreſs the grateful Sensations they entertain of them, only by celebrating their Memories. And the beſt Way of performing this, the moſt beneficial to ourſelves, as well as the trueſt Teſtimony of our Reſpect to them, is not to rob God of his Honour, by paying them that Worſhip, which is due to him alone; but to lay before us, as they did, the perfect Example of our common Lord and Maſter, and thereby engage ourſelves in the Practice of thoſe excellent Graces, which were then the Ornament of their Lives, and are now the Glory of their Memories. For without this, to commend them, is to condemn ourſelves.

Let

Let us conclude all with the following excellent Collect of our Church.

“ Almighty God, who hast given
“ thine only Son to be unto us, both
“ a Sacrifice for Sin, and also an
“ Example of godly Life; Give us
“ Grace, that we may always most
“ thankfully receive that inestimable
“ Benefit, and also daily endeavour
“ ourselves to follow the
“ blessed Steps of his most holy
“ Life, through the same Jesus Christ
“ our Lord,” To whom with thee,
O Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three
Persons and One eternal God, be ascribed,
as is most justly due, throughout
all Churches of the Saints, all
Love, Honour and Obedience, Dominion
and Power, Adoration, Praise
and Thanksgiving, both now, and
through each succeeding Period of
Time to all Eternity. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

The JUDGMENT of JACOB upon his
Sons, SIMEON and LEVI,
Having Slain the SCHECHIMITES.

P R E A C H E D A T

St. PETER'S MANCROFT, and St.
JOHN'S MADDERMARKEET,
MARCH the Fifteenth, 1746-7.

GENESIS xlix. 5, 6, 7.

*Simeon and Levi are Brethren. Instruments
of Cruelty are in their Habitations. O my
Soul, come not thou into their Secret. Unto
their Assembly, mine Honour be not thou
united: For in their Anger they slew a
Man, and in their Self-will they digged
down a Wall. Cursed be their Anger, for
it was fierce; and their Wrath, for it was
cruel: I will divide them in Jacob and
scatter them in Israel.*

WE have here in these Words the
Judgment of Jacob, upon the Ac-
tion recorded in the first Lesson, for this
Afternoon's

Afternoon's Service. It is a Chapter which will afford us all good Instruction, if carefully examined, and seriously considered by us; and was therefore made choice of, as such, by the judicious Compilers of our Liturgy, for a proper Lesson.

In the beginning of it, the melancholy Example of *Dinab* should afford those of her own Sex a proper Hint, how cautious and prudent they ought to be in all their Conduct and Behaviour. *Cicero* says, "Virtue and Decency are so nearly related, that it is difficult to separate them from each other, but in the Imagination." But, I know not how it happens, all Strictness of Behaviour is so much the Redicule of our Age, that the other, much worse, Extreme is become the common Folly.

This

This is a nice Topick, even to touch upon from this Place, and much more to make a long Discourse concerning it. I shall therefore, at present, only observe, that, if that Sex would consider how much it is the Nature of Man to esteem those Things most, which are at the greatest Distance, they would not make their Company so cheap and easy. So long as they govern themselves by the exact Rules of Prudence and Modesty, their Lustre is like the Meridian Sun in its Clearness; which, though it be then more difficult to be approached, is nevertheless accounted the more glorious: But when they decline from those, they are like that Sun in a Cloud, which, though gazed on then with the greater Safety, is yet not half so bright. But besides these collateral Advantages, it is certain that Modesty gives an immediate

diatē and direct Improvement to Beauty. For, though Men for their own vicious Ends wish them severed, yet they always think they are the most amiable when united and we shall hear them often commending the Aspect of that Modesty, which they would fain circumvent.

But the next Thing which offers itself to our Consideration, is the Consequences of the Violence committed upon *Jacob's* Daughter. What a Scene of Misery did *Schechem* bring upon himself, his Family, and all his Citizens? How dreadful in its Effects was the base Act he was guilty of! And to this Day we find no Dishonour is more deeply resented by Persons of virtuous and generous Minds, than Acts of the like Nature. Enough, one would think, to deter all
Persons

Persons from them. For though, perhaps the Rage of Parties injured may drive them beyond all due Bounds, as in the present Case it did *Simeon* and *Levi*, yet we must own, that, however dreadful the Effects were, they proceeded from a laudable Cause; and the Person guilty of the Injury, may well look upon himself, as guilty of them too, and that they will all be placed to his Account. These Sons of *Jacob* had a just Sense of the Baseness of what *Shechem* had done, and of the Dishonour they themselves suffered by it; and, all that they were faulty in, was the Excess they suffered their Passion to drive them to. *Jacob* too was as sensible of the same as they; but then he was willing to act as became a prudent and wise Man, and a Servant of the most high God. He thought it best to hearken to *Hamor's* Proposals, when he came
out

out to communicate with him; and especially when the Fault was acknowledged, and all the Reparation offered that could be desired, or indeed the Case admit of; and it was inexcusable in them, that they would not acquiesce in what their Father approved of, and themselves had agreed to. But impious beyond Measure, was it, to make Use of a religious Rite, the better to conceal their Purpose, and execute their inhuman Design. *Jacob* beheld this with Horror, and in the last Moments of his Life, expressed his Abhorrence of it, in these Words of my Text. *O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret; unto their Assembly mine Honour be thou not united.* As if he said, God forbid that I should ever silently have been privy to such base, impious Treachery, and much more the Author, or Approver of it.

Indeed,

Indeed, to execute Rigour upon an Offender, who patiently submits himself, and offers Reparation, is rather merciless than just: Or, if the Punishment had been both just and proportionable from another, yet from them, who by vowing Peace and Affinity had remitted the Offence, it was shamefully unjust. For to disappoint the Trust of another, and to neglect our own Promise and Fidelity, for private Purposes, adds Treachery to our Cruelty. But what Impiety was it, instead of honouring the holy Sign of Circumcision, to take advantage by it, to wreak their Cruelty and Malice!

But what shall we say to the Words which we find in the Book of *Judith*, Chap. ix. 2, 3, 4. Where she thus expresseth herself in Prayer to God. "O
" Lord

“ Lord God of my Father *Simeon*, to
 “ whom thou gavest a Sword, to take
 “ Vengeance of the Strangers, who loof-
 “ ened the Girdle of a Maid to defile
 “ her, and polluted her Virginitie to her
 “ Reproach (for thou saidst it should
 “ not be so, and yet they did so) where-
 “ fore thou gavest their Rulers to be
 “ slain, so that they dyed their Bed in
 “ Blood, being deceived, and smoteest
 “ the Servants with their Lords upon
 “ their Thrones; and hast given their
 “ Wives and their Daughters to be Cap-
 “ tives; and all their Spoils to be di-
 “ vided amongst thy dear Children,
 “ which were moved with thy Zeal, and
 “ abhorred the Pollution of their Blood,
 “ and called upon thee for Aid.” Was
 this Book of divine Inspiration, it would
 concern us not a little, to reconcile what
 we have now read, with that which the

Mosaical Account has given us ; but as it was never received into their Canon of holy Scripture by the *Jews* themselves, and is placed by us amongst those Books, which we pronounce Apocryphal, or not of divine Authority, it is of no great Importance, whether it be consistent or not, with the Relation given us by the inspired Penman.

The learned *Grotius* is of Opinion, that this Book of *Judith* is ænigmatical or allegorical, and was written when *Antiochus* the *Illustrious* came into *Judea*, before the Temple was prophaned by the Idols, which were afterwards set up in it ; it was composed, he thinks, with a Design of confirming the *Jews* in the Hope that God would deliver them. He imagines, that *Judea* is meant by *Judith* ; that *Bethulia* signifies the House of God,
or

or the Temple; the Sword that went out thence, are the Prayers of the Saints; that *Nebuchodonosor* signifies, frequently among the *Jews*, the Devil; *Assyria* is Pride; the Instrument of the Devil is *Antiochus*; who, under a feigned Name, is here called *Holophernes*, or the Minister of the Devil, who would have made himself Master of *Judea*, that beautiful Widow, so called, because destitute of all Relief; and that, *Eliachim* signifies God, who should rise up in its Defence.

But, however, if any Regard be to be paid to this real or imaginary History, yet, no more can be due to it, than is consistent with that which we know to be of God. Now, indeed, when we consider *Schechem's* Crime, it was an Act very inhospitable, and no doubt highly offensive in the Sight of God; and

though the Behaviour of *Simeon* and *Levi*, on that Occasion, cannot but be pronounced impious and cruel, because there was an Appearance, at least, of Repentance and Sincerity, on the Part of *Schechem* and his Father *Hamor*, and they had made a Covenant with them; yet, to God who saw the inward Motions of their Hearts, and that they complied with the solemn Rite of Circumcision, not from any religious Conviction, but to serve a secular Purpose; they might be, and doubtless were, very displeasing in the Sight of God, to whom all Falshood, and especially the making his Religion serve to such a Purpose, must be very hateful and abominable, and therefore, he might very justly give them up to the worst Effects of the Rage and Malice of their Enemies.

And

And this seems to have been the Case here, by what passed between *Hamor*, and *Scbechem* his Son, when they communed with the Men of their City, in Order to perswade them, to comply with the Conditions required by the Sons of *Jacob*. *These Men*, say they, *are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the Land, and Trade therein; for the Land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their Daughters to us for Wives, and let us give them our Daughters. Only, herein will the Men consent unto us, for to dwell with us, to be one People; if every Male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised; shall not their Cattle, and their Substance, and every Beast of theirs be ours?* These last Words shew the real Motives they went upon, Religion was in their Mouths, but Covetousness prevailed in the Heart. They came over

to the true Religion, not from any Persuasion, that there was no other God but the Lord ; but for the Sake of present Gain and Advantage ; and therefore, when *Judith* praiseth God for this Action of her Ancestor *Simeon*, it must be for the making him the Instrument of punishing these Hypocrites, who thus made his Religion a Cloak to their covetous Purposes ; and taking her Words in this Sense, they are very consistent with the Mosaical Account we have of this Transaction. Indeed, *Judith* says, “ these
“ two Brethren were moved with a Zeal
“ for God, and abhorred the Pollution
“ of their Blood, and called upon God
“ for Aid.” But this we are to regard no further, than is agreeable to the History by *Moses*. They were, it is true, sufficiently enraged at the Dishonour brought upon their Family, and therefore

fore may well be said, to have abhorred the Pollution of their Blood ; but little true Zeal for God appeared in them, when they made Use of one of the most sacred Rites of their Religion, to serve a most cruel and bloody Purpose ; and we shall but enhance the Impiety of their Action, to suppose they could have the Presumption to call upon God for Aid, to the executing so fierce, cruel, and treacherous a Design : For such, we find, in my Text, *Jacob* thought it in his last Moments, when he was under the Influence of God's divine Spirit ; *curst be their Anger, for it was fierce ; and their Wrath, for it was cruel.* And he pronounces this Judgment upon them for it ; *I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

In this Prophecy of the dying Patriarch is implied a double Dispersion, viz. of the two Tribes from each other, and of their Interspersion among the Rest. And accordingly it was afterwards literally fulfilled; for in the Land of *Canaan*, *Levi* had no Inheritance among his Brethren, but had a certain Number of Cities assigned to him in every Tribe. As for that of *Simeon*, it had properly but a Portion of *Judah's* Inheritance, if we except some few Places which they acquired upon Mount *Seir*, and in the Wilds of the Valley of *Gedor*; and it is observable, that when *Moses* afterwards, just before his Death, took his solemn Farewell of the several Tribes, he passes by that of *Simeon*, without any Blessing or Notice taken of him; though each of the Rest is dismissed with a particular Blessing; and that *Levi* met with an especial

especial Blessing, at that Time, was owing to his having wiped off his former Offence, by his Zeal for the Lord at *Massah*; when the People, in the absence of *Moses*, made and worshipped the Golden Calf. For when *Moses* returned, and stood in the Gate of the Camp, and said, *who is on the Lord's Side, let them come up unto me*; all the Sons of *Levi* gathered themselves unto him, and did according to the Word of *Moses*. And, therefore, of *Levi* he said, *let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy One, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the Waters of Meribah; who said unto his Father, and to his Mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his Brethren, nor knew his own Children.* This relates to the impartial Execution of Judgment, by the *Levites*, upon the Worshippers of the

Golden Calf, without Respect to Persons, or their nearest Relations. *For they, O God, have observed thy Word, and kept thy Covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy Judgments, and Israel thy Law. They shall put Incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine Altar.* Because they were so upright, as out of Regard to God and his Honour, to take no Pity or Notice of their dearest Relations in Judgment; they were therefore intrusted with that important and honourable Office of teaching the Statutes of God, or deciding all Controversies which arose about any Thing in the Law; but *Moses* goes on, and says: *Bless, Lord, his Substance, and accept the Work of his Hands; smite through the Loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.* For none were Enemies to the Priests and Levites, but such

such as were likewise Enemies to Religion, and therein to all civil Government; for the one cannot be supported without the other.

This, it were well if some Persons in our present Age would consider, who treat it as if it had quite a different Tendency. The Christian Religion is that, which we in this Country have received and profess. Now, the Whole of that Rule of Life it prescribes, is so plainly suited to our Composition, both in our Souls and their Faculties, and in our Bodies, with Relation to good Health, to Industry, and long Life; and to all the Interests of human Society, to the Order and Peace of the World, and to that Truth and Love, which are the Cements and Securities of the Body Politic, that, without any laboured Proof of its divine Original, these

are such Characters, that they may serve to prove that it was sent into the World by a Lover of Mankind, who knew our Nature, and what was proper both to perfect it, and to render it not only safe but happy.

There have been some, indeed, who call themselves by the Name of Christians, who have perverted that which was intended to fix in us a sincere Love and Charity towards one another, and for our mutual Preservation and Happiness, to quite different Ends and Purposes, under a Pretence of Zeal; so that the Minds of Men have been stirred up to an Anger, which was fierce, and a Degree of Wrath most cruel and deadly in its Effects; *Instruments of Cruelty, are indeed, in their Habitations*; but let not these be charged upon our Religion. We, of this Church, profess

profess our Detestation and Abhorrence of all such Methods of gaining Proselytes, or of using those who differ from us. *O, my Soul, come thou not into their Secret; unto their Assembly mine Honour be not thou united;* for we must not say, *they slew a Man only, and in their Self-will have digged down a Wall,* but they have made whole Armies of Martyrs, and have thrown down all the Fences of Right and Wrong, of Trust and Fidelity amongst Mankind. No, let it ever be the Honour of this Church and Nation, to apply itself to the Reason and Understanding of Mankind, that all may be Professors of our Religion, upon Grounds becoming reasonable Creatures, and such as will bear the Test of the severest Trials; such as may convince the Minds, or stop the Mouths of all Gainsayers,
and

and bring over the Ungodly to the Ways of Truth and Virtue. By these Means, we shall all become Christians, not only in the *Name* and *Form*, but in *Deed* and in *Truth*; not like the *Schechemites*, who embraced a Religion for temporal Profit and Advantage only, but as Persons who sincerely believe, that the Lord is our God, and the Blessed Jesus our only Redeemer and Saviour.

We have seen the fatal Consequences of that Hypocrisy which the *Schechemites* were guilty of, how by the secret Direction of Providence, that very Thing proved the Cause of their Destruction, from which they promised to themselves Riches in Abundance. God will not permit his religious Ordinances to be abused to such Purposes, without exert-
ing

ing himself in the Punishment of such impious Prophanation, and, though unseen, often makes wicked Men the Instruments in his Hand of such Vengeance. This, those amongst us would do well to consider, who partake of the Lord's Supper in our Church, purely to qualify themselves for some secular Office; for, if they approve of that Service, it will become them to think seriously with themselves, whether they ought not constantly to communicate with us therein; and if they do not, whether they be not guilty of a great Sin in thus occasionally joining in it? Of a Sin but too like that of the *Schemites*, in complying with the Rite of Circumcision, for the Opportunity they expected thereby of increasing their Substance; and whether they may not very justly fear that God should punish them by
the

the Church of *Rome*, as he did that People by the Sons of *Jacob*, by making that very sacred Ordinance, which they thus abuse, the Occasion of their final Destruction; the acknowledging or not acknowledging the corporal Presence in that Sacrament being generally the Test, by which Papists and Protestants were distinguished in Queen *Mary's* Time, and for denying of which the Latter were condemned to the Flames. But mistake me not, I would not be thought hereby to intend the raising any Animosity amongst us against our Protestant Brethren, who differ from us in some Particulars. For, God knows, there never was more Reason for us to join together against the common Enemy, than there is at present, when so much Pains are taken to procure Proselytes to *Rome*; and too many of our own
Members

Members seem not to have that proper Sense and just Abhorrence of the Tenets and Practices of that Church, which they ought to have; and almost all are insensible of the Danger we are ever in from that Quarter. But what I could heartily wish, and earnestly pray to God for, is, that none of us would partake of the Ordinances of our Church, for secular Purposes only; but that all, considering the Dignity and Sacredness of those heavenly Mysteries, would receive them with a truly, religious, and pious Mind; remembering that they are in the Sight of their Creator, who seeth not as Men seeth. For though Man looketh on the outward Appearance, and is easily deceived by Form and Shew, yet the Lord looketh on the Heart; and, therefore, unless that be true and sincere with him, their Prayer will

will be turned into Sin, and bring upon them a Curse instead of a Blessing.

Consider, I beseech you, what has been said, with that Candor and truly Christian Spirit, with which I have endeavoured to compose this Discourse, and do now, I hope, deliver it to you. And I pray unto God, that by the Influence of his Grace and Holy Spirit, we may all see and follow the Things which belong to our present Peace and Prosperity in this World, and will most assuredly secure to us perfect and endless Happiness in that which is to come, even for the Sake of Jesus Christ, our most blessed Redeemer and Saviour, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, the eternal Trinity in the ever blessed and the undivided Unity, be ascribed,

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cribed, as is most justly due of us,
and all Mankind, all Love, Honour
and Obedience, Dominion and Power,
Adoration, Praise, and Thanksgiving,
both now, and through each succeeding
Period of Time, to all Eternity.

Amen.

SERMON.

S E R M O N VII.

The Difficulties to be met with in the
H O L Y S C R I P T U R E S,

No sufficient Argument against them.

Preached at the BISHOP'S VISITATION,

At the C A T H E D R A L, at N O R W I C H,

On T H U R S D A Y, J U L Y the Tenth, 1735.

2. St. P E T E R, iii. 16. *Latter Part*

In which are some Things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned, and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own Destruction.

BY consulting the Writers of the first Ages of Christianity, we shall find, that even in those early Times, there were

were a great many amongst those, who called themselves Christians, of such Pride and self-conceit, as not to be satisfied with any, but the fond Suggestions of the vain and foolish Imaginations of their own Minds. They endeavoured by broaching new Opinions, to make themselves Heads of Sects; they spoke perverse Things, and laboured to bring the pure Writings of Truth, to speak in Favour of their new and impious Doctrines, and that not only by forced and absurd Interpretations, but where they could, laying sacrilegious Hands on the Gospels and Epistles, by Additions in some Places, and Defalcations in others, jumbling and confounding Periods, profanely striving to alter and debase the divine Text. Of this we are informed by* *Irenaeus*,

* Con. March. Lib. 1. in Princip.

neus, Epiphanius, † and Tertullian ‡.
But of all the Testimonies we have of the Impudence and Rage of these heretical Misinterpreters, and Depravers of those heavenly Volumes, that of *St. Peter*, in my Text, is the most satisfactory and remarkable. Wherein, after he had exhorted the Persons to whom he wrote, to account that the long suffering of the Lord is Salvation, even as his beloved Brother *St. Paul*, also according to the Wisdom given unto him, had written unto them, as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these Things, he says, *in which are some Things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other Scriptures to their own Destruction;* and this at a
Time,

† Con. March. Tom. iii. Lib. 1. ‡ Lib. 1.
Cap. 29.

Time, when the Authors of them were then alive, and who, doubtless, were the best Interpreters of them, but whom, these self-conceited Wretches were too proud to have Recourse to, or be determined by.

Whether or no, in my Text, the Words, *in which* have relation to the Things spoken of in *St. Paul's* Epistles, or to the Epistles themselves (which last I think to be the most probable) since in some of the best Manuscripts, the Original is *en ais, in which Epistles*, and not *en ois, in which Things*, as we have it in our common Editions. But which soever we admit, yet it has been always confessed by learned Men, that there are not only in *St. Paul's* Epistles, but also in the other Sacred Writings, some Things hard to be understood; neither
does

does it concern any Christian to deny it; notwithstanding the Objections that have been therefore made to their divine Authority. It is sufficient that all Things necessary to our Belief and Practice, are plainly and clearly revealed in them; some Things there are spoken of in them, of so mysterious and sublime a Nature, that it is no Wonder our finite and narrow Abilities cannot comprehend them, which, yet may be so evidently revealed, that we cannot reasonably refuse our Assent to them; and there are others, no doubt, which though well enough understood by the first Christians, yet to us who know not the particular Customs, or Circumstances alluded to, may very well appear very dark and unintelligible; but, which therefore it is not necessary now for us to understand; and those *Passages in St. Paul's Epistles,*

Epistles, concerning Justification, Election and Reprobation, and other Particulars, which have been the Subjects of so many Disputes and Controversies in the World; and which, by *the unlearned and unstable*, have been wrested and interpreted to Senses quite different from the Apostle's Meaning, unworthy of God, and very prejudicial to the Peace and Happiness of Mankind, appear to those that are unprejudiced, and are truly learned in the original Language, and take *St. Paul* for his own Interpreter, to be very consistent with the Doctrines taught by his beloved Master.

But if we consider further the Nature of *St. Paul's* Writings, we shall think it rather wonderful that there are so few, than that there are so many Things, that we are now at a Loss to

understand. They were Epistles or Letters, calculated for the particular Instruction and Information of the Persons to whom he wrote them. Now, in such Sort of Writings, the Persons to whom they are directed, being particularly concerned in the subject Matter of them, easily understood the Meaning of the least Hints, which, to a Stranger utterly unacquainted with the Circumstances, will appear altogether dark and unintelligible. Besides, some of the Apostle's Epistles were written in Answer to Letters or Messages which had been sent him; the Contents of which, as we are unacquainted with, it is no Wonder that we do not always see the exact Meaning of every Sentence in the Answer; since the Knowledge of those may sometimes be absolutely necessary to the full understanding the Reply. *St.*

Paul

Paul was moreover a Man of a warm Temper, of a quick Thought and Imagination ; and his Manner of Writing is agreeable thereto ; I speak the Sentiments of a most impartial and judicious Writer. He had a thorough Knowledge in the Writings of the Old Testament ; was exceeding well versed in all Learning, human and divine ; and his Mind was full of the Doctrine of Christianity. So that having such a vast Store of Knowledge, whenever he wrote upon those Subjects, Matter flowed into him in such Abundance, that he often leaves his Subject, speaks sometimes in his own Person, and sometimes in another ; has large Parenthesis, and answers Objections, without mentioning them for such, and resumes his Discourse, without giving any Item or Notice of it ; which yet, to the Persons he

wrote to, and who read them for Information in their particular Cases, were all of them very clear, and easily distinguished by them, especially as they were acquainted with him and his Manner of Writing; but which requires now a very attentive and judicious Reader to go along with him, see where he breaks off in an Argument, and where he resumes it, and take in the whole Scope and Design of his Epistle, which is often absolutely necessary to the understanding some Passages of it; and therefore, as there are but few such, no wonder they are so frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted; to which Evil has not a little contributed the present Division of them into Chapters and Verses, whereby they are so broken and divided, that Men are greatly hindered thereby from seeing the Thread and Coherence

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herence of his Discourse ; which I doubt not would be the Effect in the reading any other Letter or Composition, were it so injudiciously, as *his* often are, divided and subdivided into such Parcels or Fragments.

I know the Difficulty of understanding some of the Rest of the inspired Writers, has been ascribed to their being Men of no Education and Learning. That though in composing the sacred Writings, they were under the Inspiration and Guidance of the Holy Ghost, they were left nevertheless to the free Use of their natural Faculties and Powers, and to express themselves, every one after their particular Fashion and Manner. That though the Holy Ghost presided over the Minds and Pens of the Apostles, so far as to pre-

serve them from Error, yet, as to the Manner of expressing what they wrote, they were left to themselves ; and therefore, though their Writings contain nothing but what is true, yet they must needs be expressed after the unequal imperfect Manner of such unlearned Men, not always with the same Degree of Clearness and Perspicuity. But this, I think, will not be reckoned a true Account by good Judges of the original Language in which they wrote the Holy Scriptures. For how can we imagine that unlearned Fishermen and Tradesmen should write with that Purity of Stile, that Elegancy and Emphasis of Expression, as to equal, and often excel, the best Writers in the same Language, as has been evidently proved they do by very learned Men, if they were not enabled thereto by the
Help

Help and Assistance of God's divine Spirit, as well as in the subject Matter of their Writings? And that they were so, there is the greatest Reason to think, from that miraculous *Gift of Tongues* they were on the Day of *Pentecost*, endued with from on High. But the Reasons before given sufficiently shew, why our understanding the Holy Scriptures at this Distance of Time from their first Publication, should naturally be attended with some Difficulties.

But could not the Holy Ghost have prevented this Evil, by composing and transmitting these sacred Writings down to us in such a Manner, as to have made them equally intelligible in all Ages to Mankind? It were no other than blasphemous Impiety to say he

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could

could not. But, besides some Reasons we may be ignorant of, there are several wise and good Ones which may be assigned why he did not. As, first, to quell the Pride of Men, and allay the high Conceit they are too apt to entertain of their own Abilities and Judgment. That seeing a few Fishermen conveying the most sublime and heavenly Truths, not to be fully comprehended by the wisest of Men, in a Language and Stile equal, and often superior to the finest and most elegant Writers that ever were, they might learn to be humble, and confess that Wisdom is the Gift of God alone, and piously give their Assent to the Doctrines delivered by them in that miraculous Manner, as they far excel in every Respect the Wisdom of the Wise of this World. Another Reason why
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the Holy Ghost delivered the divine Will in obscure Terms *hard to be understood*, might be to raise a Reverence in Mens Minds of the all-wise Author of it. That by thus drawing, as it were, a Vail before him, Men might be struck with Admiration, when they should *see him as he is*. We are too apt to despise or disregard in a short Time, what is at once exhibited to our View; but that which costs us a great Deal of Pains and Thought to come at the Knowledge of, is usually prized and valued the more by us. And we who are generally so long before we become Masters of any human Science, might have been apt to have suspected the divine Original of the Gospel Revelation, if every Part of it had been immediately plain and obvious to our Understandings. But God has, in all his Dis-

pensations, adopted himself to the Nature of our Souls. He begins with giving us plain and easy Rules for our Conduct; opens himself to us by Degrees, and makes us at last receive the most sublime and mysterious Doctrines, with a Faith and Reverence due to the infinite Wisdom and Goodness that reveals them; thereby preserving the Majesty of Religion, keeping up in his Creatures a just Sense of their own Weakness and Ignorance, and his Wisdom, that we might not pretend to be *wise above what is written*, but submit our Understandings to the *Obedience of Faith*.

The Holy Scriptures are admirably fitted to the Tempers and Capacities of all Mankind. There are none but may receive infinite Benefit and Satisfaction
from

from them. They give Wisdom unto the Ignorant, dispelling all the Errors, and shewing them the Ways, whereby they shall assuredly attain eternal Life. And Men of the finest Parts and Abilities, of the most extensive human Learning and Knowledge, may always, in the Study of them, find fresh Information and Delight. The Wisest may thence continually receive an Increase of Wisdom, and no well-disposed Person go away from the Perusal of them without great Comfort and Advantage. But as the best Things may be deprived of their natural Efficacy by an ill Use of them, so it has too often fared with those heavenly Volumes. The most excellent Medicine, by a bad Practice, may be turned into the most deadly Poison. Some Men of perverse Minds have taken those sacred Writings into their

sacrilegious Hands, not with any Intent to enrich their Minds with the divine Truths in them contained, but to wrest them to Senses quite foreign to their Purpose, that they may thereby seem to favour their impious preconceived Notions. Instead of consulting them to inform themselves aright, their only Endeavour is to interpret them in such a Manner, as to make them patronise their Errors. This was what *St. Peter* complained of in his Time, and what we too in these last Ages have equal Reason to lament. Arguments have been drawn from the Scriptures themselves, to make Men stagger in the Belief of its Doctrines. And the Divinity of the heavenly Author of them hath been impiously called in Question and disputed against, by perversely wresting and torturing those very Texts whereby he intended

tended to reveal that Doctrine to us; and where it has not been possible to give them another Sense, they have sacrilegiously discarded them, as Interpolations and Additions made in after Ages, though they might with as good Reason, as some others indeed have done, have denied the Divinity of the Whole.

St. Peter tells us in my Text, the Event of such an impious and profane Practice: They *wrest the Scriptures to their own Damnation*. For however they may deceive their Fellow-Creatures, and by their plausible Arguments and other Pretences, seem wiser and better than other Men (though in this last Respect, the profligate and abandoned Lives of the greatest Part of them cannot well deceive any One) yet our Lord *will not*
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be mocked; he knows their wicked Intentions, and they who thus deny him before Men, shall, at the last great Day of Account, be denied by Him, before his Father, who is in Heaven. And they who endeavoured to unhinge their own and other Mens Minds, with regard to the Doctrines of Christianity, shall find that of a future State most dreadfully verified in their own eternal Ruin.

It is the Conduct of such Men which has furnished the Church of *Rome* with that plausible Argument for shutting up the Holy Scriptures from the People, since, as they say, the most impious Opinions, all the Heresies and Schisms that have subsisted amongst Protestants, have been owing to their having in general the Perusal of them. This Argument of theirs, plausible as it may seem

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to some weak Minds, has indeed no Truth, or any solid Foundation in it. But yet I would not that we of the Church of *England* should either by our Writings, or profane Discourses on Subjects of a religious and spiritual Nature, give them the least Handle for such an Objection. All Men are not able to discern the Weakness or Falsity of a specious Argument, but it requires no great Sagacity to judge when People write or talk in a prophane Manner of divine Things. And if they see such a Practice common amongst us, do we not give the Enemy a desirable Opportunity of persuading our weak Brethren of the Expediency of taking away the Holy Scriptures from them; and when that be accomplished, of making them an easy Prey, and getting them entirely over to them, to embrace
their

their false and pernicious Opinions? We indeed, that have been well instructed and established in the Doctrines and Practice of the Church of *England*, are well aware of the Artifices of the Church of *Rome*, and can easily shew how contrary many of the Articles of their Faith, the Rites and Ceremonies of their Worship, are to the whole Tenor of the Gospel. And this many of them know as well as we, and therefore it is no Wonder they should endeavour to keep Men from a Sight of the Holy Scriptures, which condemn both their Doctrines and Practice. It is our Business, therefore, by avoiding all Manner of Prophaneness, and *walking worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called*, to give them no Occasion to upbraid us with abusing the Privilege we enjoy of reading the Word of God ourselves, or
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of making Use of it as a Reason why Men should be debarred from it. For though indeed they have the least Reason to charge us with Impiety and Irreligion, since in those Respects, they equal, if not exceed us, yet I would be willing that we should as much excel them in true Piety and Virtue, as we unquestionably do in the Purity and Conformity of our Doctrines and Worship to the Gospel of our blessed Master, and the Belief and Practice of the first and purest Ages of Christianity, as may be very evidently proved from those their Writings, which have escaped the Ruins and Desolation of Time.

The Holy Scriptures were given us as the Rule of our Faith. In them are contained *the Words of eternal Life*; and it will be wholly our own Fault, if they
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do not conduce to the Furtherance of our Salvation. We, indeed, have no Temptation to use them to any bad Purpose. The Church of *England* is not afraid of having her Articles brought to the Test, and of being fairly and impartially tried by the Word of God, as being conscious to herself of her holding and prescribing nothing to her Members, but what is founded therein and agreeable thereto. But this is not the Case with the Church of *Rome*. She will not allow the Scriptures to be the Rule of Mens Faith; or if she be forced sometimes to confess them to be the Foundation of it, she will allow none but the Pope to be the Interpreter of them. From him her Members must take the Sense of them; and though his Interpretations be never so contrary, as they often are, to the plain Construction

tion and Meaning of them, they must nevertheless acquiesce in them, and believe and practice according to his Directions, under the severest Penalties. So that the Ministers of that Church are tempted to wrest the Scriptures, in Order to point out the Bishop of *Rome* as the infallible Judge in spiritual Matters, and his Determinations to contain the true Sense of those sacred Writings, that they may preserve their Preferments, and their tyrannical Power and Authority over their People. How they can answer doing so to their Consciences I know not. But they are not the only Persons who are guided by a worldly Interest ; and a Power at first unjustly gotten, is generally supported by the same Methods it was originally acquired. And, therefore, we find the Members of the Church of *Rome*, pursuing the same
Scheme

Scheme of Politics, in upholding and encreasing their Authority, by which it was formed at the Beginning.

Their Practice herein may afford us good Instructions, and we may countertermine all their Arts and Stratagems, by following the pious Example of our first Reformers, as they do the wicked Policy of those who laid the first Foundation of their lawless and unchristian Tyranny over the Consciences and Lives of the Persons under them. As they take a great Deal of Pains to keep People from a Sight of the Holy Scriptures, let us, as our first Reformers, be as industrious to bring People to a diligent and careful Perusal of those sacred Writings. And as they endeavour to wrest and pervert them to Senses in Favour of their Doctrines and Practice,

rice, let us be fired with a holy and laudable Zeal in their Defence, and rescue them from such prophane and sacrilegious Usage, by exposing the Wickedness and Impiety of their Intentions, by shewing the Impropriety and Falseness of their Interpretations, and delivering them to our fellow Christians in their native Purity and Splendor. And then will vanish the pretended Infallibility of the Bishop of *Rome*. Transubstantiation will be no more. The praying to Saints and worshipping of Images, will be regarded by all our Members with a just Abhorrence. We shall reverence, indeed, and praise the Memories of those illustrious Heroes of Christianity, but trust only in the Merit of our blessed Redeemer. And those Two only we shall allow for Sacraments, as generally necessary

cessary to Salvation, which Christ himself hath ordained in his Church, *viz.* Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord. The Church of *England* will then appear in the Purity and Lustre of primitive Christianity, and her Members disdaining the foolish and superstitious Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of *Rome*, worship the Lord *in the Beauty of Holiness*, in that most excellent Form of Prayer prescribed by her.

The Holy Scriptures are in all Things necessary to be believed and practised by us, plain and easy to be understood; and in such the most obvious Meaning is generally the best. There is no Occasion to wrest and torture the Holy Scriptures to discover what is required of us, either as to Faith or Practice. Neither do we find any but self-conceited

ceited Persons, and such who have some private Ends to serve thereby, make Use of that unchristian and prophane Method, in explaining those heavenly Volumes. If we would act fairly, and as becomes Men of Honesty and Judgment, whose Aim and Desire are to find out and embrace that which is truly the Will of our God, we should follow the same Rule in our Interpretations of those sacred Writings, that we do in our Explanations of any valuable Book of human Composition. And as upon a Presumption, that every judicious Author is in the same Book always consistent with himself, we understand and explain those Passages in him, which are somewhat dark and obscure, so as to make them agree in Sense, with those that are clear and plain; surely we have much stronger Reason to pursue the like

like Method in our Study of the Holy Scriptures. For Men of the finest Parts and Abilities, of the most extensive Learning and solid Judgment, are subject to Error; and there are not a few Instances, in the Writings of some of the most considerable Men, of their having, as it were, sometimes forgot themselves, and advancing in one Part of their Works what is entirely inconsistent with their Sentiments in another. So that if we always proceed by the afore-mentioned Rule, in judging of their Writings, we shall often find ourselves mistaken and deceived. But this can never be the Case with the Holy Scriptures. They were all dictated by the same divine infallible Spirit, and therefore there cannot possibly be any real Contradiction or Inconsistency in them; and consequently the surest Way to come always

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at the true Meaning of them, is to make the clear and plain Parts of them our Rule in judging of those that are dark and obscure; and not, as is the preposterous and prophane Manner of some Persons, put their own Senses upon the difficult Passages, and then endeavour so to darken and perplex the clearest and most intelligible Texts, and wrest and torture them in such a Manner, as to make them favour their own impious Notions.

If Men would thus ingenuously make the Scriptures themselves their own Interpreters, we should see a speedy End put to those Controversies about religious Matters, that have so long perplexed and disturbed the World, and raised so many different Opinions and Sects amongst us; and the blessed Con-

sequence would be, that we should look upon ourselves as *one Body*, enlivened and acted by *one Spirit*, holding *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all*, and worship him with *one Heart*, and in *one Way*; always endeavouring *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

But whether or no those who differ from us, will join in this pious and truly christian Method of Proceeding, we of this most pure and reformed Church should nevertheless pursue it in all our religious Enquiries, and manifest to all the World, that though our Articles and ecclesiastical Polity, do not quadrate and agree with the private Humours and Fancies, and fond Reasonings of some Men, yet the Doctrines we believe, are no other than the

Doctrines

Doctrines of the Gospel, and our Worship and Discipline very consistent with God's revealed Will, and with the Practice of the Church in the first and purest Ages of Christianity. So shall we discharge our Duty to God, the Church and all its Members, and cut off Occasion from them that desire Occasion to find Fault, and by daily adding to the Church such as shall be saved, become at length one Fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ the Righteous, to whom with Thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, three Persons, and one eternal God, be ascribed, as is most justly due, throughout all Churches of the Saints, all Love, Honour and Obedience, Might, Majesty and Dominion, Adoration, Praise and Thanksgiving, both now, and through each succeeding Period of Time to all Eternity. *Amen.*

S E R M O N VIII.

Respect due to the Ministers of the Gospel, from the Nature and Dignity of their Office.

Preached at the CATHEDRAL, upon
an ORDINATION SUNDAY.

2 Corinthians, iv. 5.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves, your Servants, for Jesus' Sake.

IT has been in all Ages of Christianity, and is now a Reproach too commonly cast upon the Ministers of the Gospel, that our sole End and View in preaching, and in discharging the other Duties of our Function, is either
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the compassing thereby our own Glory, or our secular Advantage. This was what the great Apostle of the Gentiles was charged with. He was represented as a vain-glorious Man, and that whatever he might pretend, he was carrying on some hidden Design under the Shew of propagating the Christian Religion, and was at the Bottom a cunning, artful, self interested Man. That he preached himself, and not Christ Jesus the Lord. In Order to clear himself of these Accusations, he wrote this his Second Epistle to the *Corinthians*, wherein, if we read it with Attention, we shall observe, that great Master of Reasoning, and sincere Servant of the blessed Jesus, with the most judicious Address possible, the most pious Strains of Eloquence, and a most becoming Confidence, testifying his Love and Af-

fection for those new Converts, plainly confuting the base Insinuations, and laying open the vile Intentions of those who had maliciously slandered him, and clearly demonstrating to all the World, that he had no other End in View, but the Glory of God, and the Benefit of his Fellow-Creatures.

He confesses, indeed, that in his Discourses to them, he used great *Freedom and Plainness of Speech*; and he defends himself by proving that it is no more than what became a Minister of the Gospel. The Employment he had was an honourable Employment, and far exceeded the Ministry of the Law in Glory. *If, therefore, says he, the Ministration of Death, the Ministry of the Law, written and engraven in Stones, which condemns to Death, was glorious,*

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so that the Children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the Face of Moses, for the Glory of his Countenance, which Glory was to be done away; How shall not the Ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? How can it be otherwise, but that the Ministry of the Spirit, which giveth Life, must confer more Glory and Lustre on the Ministers of the Gospel? For if the Ministration of Condemnation be Glory, the Ministry of Righteousness or Justification in the Gospel doth certainly much more exceed in Glory. Seeing then that I have such Hope, am placed in such a Post, as sets me above all mean Considerations and Compliances, I may be allowed surely to use great Freedom and Plainness of Speech in all Things that concern my Ministry; and I do assure you, that whatever mine and your Enemies say to the Contrary, that my

Behaviour in the Ministry has been sincere; and that in preaching the Gospel, I have been plain, clear, open and candid, without any hidden Design, or the least Mixture of any concealed secular Interest. I have *renounced the hidden Things of Dishonesty*, all unworthy and indirect Projects, which will not bear the Light; *not walking in Craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; recommending myself to every one's Conscience*, only by making plain the Truth which I deliver, as in the Presence of God. *But if the Gospel, which I preach, be still obscure and hidden, it is so only to those that are lost. In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them. For in performing my Duty, I have*
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not fought my own Glory, or present worldly Interest ; I have not preached myself, *but Christ Jesus our Lord* ; and have always, and do now, profess myself *your Servant for Jesus' Sake*. *We have this Treasure in earthen Vessels* ; we, who are the Ministers of the Gospel, are indeed of ourselves but weak and frail Men ; but by this you may plainly perceive, that the exceeding great Power and Influence that attends our Labours, must be from God, and not from us.

Thus have I laid before you, in some Measure, our Apostle's Defence ; and I wish to God, you may lend an unprejudiced and favourable Ear, whilst, from some of the same Considerations, I persuade you to pay a just and equal Regard to what the Ministers of the Gospel teach, out of the Holy Scrip-

tures. We, as *St. Paul* did, have dedicated ourselves to your Service ; all our Studies are directed to your Benefit ; all that we do is for your Sakes ; we use our utmost Endeavours to make as many of you obey the Precepts of the Gospel as we can, that so the more partaking of the Mercy and Favour of God, of which there is a plentiful and inexhaustible Store, the more may give Thanks unto Him, and his Glory and Honour be thereby in the End the more promoted. They who have received the Ministry of the Word, are to be accounted of, the Apostle says, *as the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. They are Ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by them. They pray you in Christ's Stead, to be reconciled to God. And as Workers together with him, they beseech you,*

you, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain. They are to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long Suffering and Doctrine. They are to be watchful in all Things, make full Proof of their Ministry, and confirm the Souls of Christians, and exhort them to continue in the Faith. They must not be negligent to stir the Brethren up, but must be always putting them in Remembrance of those Things that pertain unto Life and Godliness, though they know them, and be established in the present Truth. They are to exhort, comfort, and charge every one of them (as a Father doth his Children) that they would walk worthy of God, who hath called them unto his Kingdom and Glory. They are to teach the People the Difference between the Holy and the Profane, and cause them to discern between the Unclean and the Clean.

They are to take particular Care of their Flocks, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers. For grievous Wolves shall enter in, not sparing the Flock. Also of their own selves, even from among those of the same Ministry, shall Men arise, speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them; therefore are they to be always upon the Watch, and keep in Remembrance this Warning. They are, in fine, to speak the Things which become sound Doctrine, to be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient; in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves: In all Things shewing themselves Patterns of good Works; in Doctrine shewing Uncorruptedness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech that cannot be condemned; that he, which is of the contrary Part, may be ashamed, having no evil Thing to say of them.

Thus

Thus do the Holy Scriptures set forth the Nature of our Office ; these are the strict Rules which we are obliged to observe. We seem to be in a more particular Manner required almost to divest ourselves of all Passion : We are not to be moved by any Provocations or Sights which we may meet with ; our own temporal Glory and Interest are to have no Part in our Views, but all our Endeavours are to be directed to the Glory of God, and the Benefit of our Fellow-Creatures : We are not to *preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and are to be ourselves your Servants for Jesus' Sake.* Now there is no considerate Man but must see how hard and difficult a Task is laid upon us. It were therefore but good Nature and common Justice in other Persons, to contribute all they can to our Ease in the Performance
of

of it; to lend us their Assistance, and to remove as much as may be every Thing that tends to discourage or hinder us in our Progress. They should consider that we are Men, as well as themselves; that we have naturally the same Passions that they have; that we are subject to the same Violences and Emotions that others are. They should therefore take particular Care not to do any Thing that may make us forget ourselves, that may raise our Passions and stifle our Reason, since not only we shall suffer thereby, but those also committed to our Care; since it will rebound not only to our Detriment, but will hinder also the Progress of Christianity, and in a great Measure defeat our blessed Redeemer's merciful Design. Calumnies and Reproaches that are cast upon us have an infinitely worse Effect, than

than the same thrown upon others. It is impossible to say how much the Success of our Labours depend upon the Reputations we sustain in the World. Unless our Characters be clear and unspotted, unless we have the Esteem of Men, to recommend what we do, (which the most sincere and faithful amongst us may, by the Malice and Contempt of others, be deprived of) all our Endeavours, however piously intended, will meet with a severe Construction, will be thought to proceed from false Principles, and to be the Effect of Pride and Vanity.

Under these hard Censures our Austerity will pass for Ill-nature, our Piety for Affectation, and our Devotion for Hypocrisy. Our Religion will be reckoned but a Cloak and a Pretence, and all
that

that we do, even in the Discharge of our Duty, will seem to be designed and conducted to our own Glory or Interest. In the most favourable Opinion we shall be nothing worth. For a Minister of the Gospel that is without Reputation, is, in the Sight of Men, as he that hath not Charity is in the Sight of God. *Though he understandeth the Languages of all Nations, and has all the Arts and Powers of Persuasion to recommend Religion; though he speaks with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, he becomes, and will be as little regarded, as a sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.* A Minister of the Gospel receives the same Advantage from his good Name, that a Flower does from the Leaves about it. Whilst they are green, and in their Vigour, the Flower is both defended and adorned by them; but as
soon

soon as they are blasted, the Flower seems to sicken and decay; and though its Perfume and real Virtues may remain, all its Beauty vanishes, and it becomes disregarded. And thus it is with a Minister of the Gospel: Whilst his Reputation is clear, and Men have a good Opinion of him, they will consider every Thing that he says or does in the most favourable Light, and he will be enabled thereby to be of that Service he was designed for. But if his Character be blemished, and he be deprived of that which should recommend him, though he may still be really a Man of Integrity, all that he either says or does will signify nothing. The want of that one Thing to adorn and set off his Virtues, will render all his best Endeavours fruitless. An unspotted Reputation is a Light that shines before Men
to

to shew our good Works, and render the Beauty of them more conspicuous. It sets off every Action, it gives Force and Energy to our Words, and Influence to our Examples, thereby promotes the Credit of Religion and the Honour of God. It at once displays our Perfections, and hides our Infirmities, discovers our Virtue, and conceals our Weakness. There is in us, as well as in other Men, some Mixture of human Infirmity, something to obscure and sully the Glory of the most innocent Lives; but a good Name veils the Blemishes, and like that Robe of Innocence which our first Parents possessed before their Fall, throws a Lustre upon our most indifferent Actions.

It was owing to these Considerations, I doubt not, that we find *St. Paul* so solici-

solicitous to clear his Character from those Aspersions his malicious Enemies had cast upon it. Though he had lived in all good Conscience, though it had been his constant Exercise always to maintain *a Conscience void of Offence, both towards God and towards Men*, yet he was truly sensible, that unless those he preached to, entertained likewise the same Opinion of him, all that he said or wrote to them, would miss of its due Effect. It was their Sentiments concerning him, that were to free their Minds from all Prejudice, make them attend to the Doctrines he taught, and pay a just Regard to the Precepts he laid down. Had he been born for himself alone, an inward Sense of his own Innocence and Integrity, had been as much as he need to desire. But as God had made him a chosen Vessel, had

com-

commissioned him to declare his Will
 unto the Gentiles, something more was
 necessary than that Self-consciousness of
 his own Sincerity. He had many Ene-
 mies to combat with ; those who look-
 ed upon him as *a Setter forth of strange*
Gods, and they who were under Appre-
 hensions of having *their Craft set at*
nought, and consequently of their being
 deprived of the Way they were in of
 encreasing their Fortunes, (if what our
 Apostle delivered should be generally
 received) were therefore continually
 spreading Reports about him ; were
 perpetually endeavouring to persuade
 the People that he was only setting up
 himself ; that those who had been bap-
 tized by him, had been baptized in his
 own Name, and not in the Name of
 Jesus, whose Apostle he pretended to
 be ; and that whatever Use he might
 sometimes

sometimes make of a Shew of acting by his Authority alone, he had at the Bottom deeper Designs in View; he was in Truth endeavouring to set up himself, and by attempting to make People think him an extraordinary Person, to draw Multitudes after him, and so make himself at length what he had a Mind to.

These were the Things he had been charged with, and as he was sensible, that unless he could clear himself of those Aspersions, and make the Malice and Hypocrisy of his Enemies plainly appear, he could expect little Success from his Ministry; we see, he was very industrious, first, to defend himself against what had been alledged against him, and fully to convince the Persons he preached to, that his Designs were
just

just and honest, that he had nothing but their Benefit and the Glory of his and their God in View ; that he preached not himself, *but Christ Jesus the Lord, and himself, their Servant, for Jesus' Sake.* Till this was done, we find he was continually the Object of their Mockery and Ridicule, and persecuted and oppressed by them, or at least disregarded and despised. But when he had fully cleared his Character, and procured their good Opinion of him, the Number of his Converts daily increased, *and there were added to the Church Multitudes both of Men and Women.* Of so great Service was it, even to our blessed Apostle himself in the Discharge of his Ministry, to have a good Character among those to whom he was to preach and inculcate the Doctrines of the Gospel. And it is doubtless as necessary among

us at this Day ; and therefore it behoveth all, who have the Honour of our most holy Religion at Heart, and sincerely desire the Propagation of it, and a general Obedience to the Precepts of it, to be very tender of the Reputations of its Ministers. We have seen how much their Success depend upon their Characters : We should therefore avoid every Action or Expression that may tend to blacken them, or even to diminish and lessen them in the Eyes of the World. They find it difficult enough to discharge their Office as they ought, and in such a Manner as may answer the Ends designed by the gracious Author of our Religion, even though they meet with all the Encouragement and Assistance possible from other Persons. We should not, therefore, instead of assisting them, endeavour to make the

Task

Task they have still more difficult, by throwing Ruts in their Way; by lessening them in the Eyes of the World, and exposing them to its Disrespect and Contempt. The Commission of every Minister in the Gospel, is derived from the same Authority; it is the Doctrine of the blessed Jesus, which we all preach; they are his Precepts which all of us recommend to your Practice and Observation. I beseech you therefore to attend to and receive what we say, not as if it were the *Word of Man*, but as it is in Truth the *Word of God*. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves, your Servants, for Jesus' Sake.

There is so much Weight in this Argument of the Apostle, that I know not how to leave it, without some farther

ther Observations on it. For can it reasonably be imagined that Men would take upon them so hard and difficult an Employment as that of the Ministry, had they not higher Views than what centre in this World. There is not any Office, as a most judicious Author has rightly observed, that is attended with more Labour, or more Vexation; not any accompanied with more wearisome Toil, more Care, or more tedious Attendance. The Ministers of the Gospel are deservedly called *Watchmen* by the inspired Penmen, as being obliged to stand always on the Guard; to be always wakeful and attentive, and ready to warn the People of approaching Dangers. And *Shepherds* likewise they are justly stiled, as being obliged to endure the various Hardships of that uneasy Life, the Inconvenience of all Weathers,

the nipping Frosts and burning Heats, and all Manner of irksome Travel. They must feed, they must guide, they must defend; they must seek the lost, and bring back the straying Sheep. What constant Study, what earnest Contention of Soul are they obliged to use in the continual Instruction, Exhortation, and Reprehension of those committed to their Charge? What Pains are they required to take, in order to rectify Men's Judgments, satisfy their Scruples, remove their Prejudices, bear their Infirmities, and sympathize with their Afflictions? 'Tis they that are engaged with all their Might to withstand the prevailing Encroachments of Iniquity, to stop the Progress of pernicious Errors, to detect the false Pretences of Impostors, to confute the Fallacies, and to repel the Assaults of all the Adversaries.

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faries of Religion; and not only so, but, when there be Occasion, to expose not only the dearest Contents of Life, but even their Lives themselves, in the Defence thereof.

When the Enemies of Religion prevail, they are the first Persons that are struck at. Thus *Eusebius* informs us, that *Maximus* commanded, that the Governors of the Church should be put to Death, as being the Authors of the Growth and Prevalency of the Gospel Doctrine. Neither was it a Practice peculiar to that bloody Tyrant, but it constantly follows, as a Thing of Course, that wherever Righteousness and Truth are violently opposed, their Ministers are sure to taste deepest of that bitter Cup. Their Goods are, in the first Place sequestered and spoiled, their Reputations

putations are stained, their Persons misused, and their Lives sacrificed to the Persecutors outrageous Malice. Of these Things we have had too fatal Experience in this very Nation. And the Enemies of our Religion will take a Pleasure, if they can bring Persons of Piety and Virtue, to join with them in their Censures of the Clergy, as knowing that to be the most effectual Way to cast a lasting Odium and Contempt upon them, and to make Men pay an entire Disregard to all their Sermons and Exhortations; and by that Means prepare the Way to their acting over the same bloody Tragedy again. These Things it behoves us all seriously to consider; and when we come thereby fully to see the Designs of the Enemies of Christianity, and the fatal Issue of having the

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the Ministers of the Gospel brought into Contempt, we shall be inclined to treat them all with Civility and Respect; hear them with Candour, conceal their Miscalriages, and assist their Endeavours; that so an End may be put to the Designs of the Enemies of our Religion, all their pernicious Projects frustrated, and brought to nought; and Religion be established and practised in the World, to the Honour of God, and the Salvation of all our immortal Souls. For the obtaining whereof we shall not cease, and I hope, all Christians will join with us, to make our humble Petitions unto Almighty God our heavenly Father, to whom, with the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons, and one eternal God, be ascribed, as is most justly due, throughout all Churches of the Saints,

all

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all Might, Majesty, and Dominion,
Love, Honour, and Obedience, Ado-
ration, Praise, and Thanksgiving, both
now, and through each succeeding Period
of Time, to all Eternity. *Amen.*

End of the FIRST VOLUME.

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